







FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY

VOLUME TWO

INDIA'S MESSAGE



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# FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY

VOLUME TWO

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## INDIA'S MESSAGE

*By*

M. N. ROY

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## PREFACE

ALTHOUGH this volume is a collection of random notes, made in jail, it can be regarded as an introduction to the study of an important branch of social science, namely, criticism of the religious mode of thought. The first two essays were included in my book *Science and Superstition*, published about ten years ago, soon after I came out of imprisonment. That book has been long out of print, but is still in demand. The rest of the contents of this volume are hitherto unpublished material. The other essays published in the old book will be incorporated in an enlarged second edition of the first volume of *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary*, which also will include some unpublished essays.

The belief in India's spiritual message to the materialist West is a heady wine. It is time to realise that the pleasant inebriation offered a solace to proud intellectuals with inferiority complex. The legacy of that psychological aggressiveness is not an asset, but a liability. For it prevents India from making the best of national independence. Therefore, a critical examination of what is cherished as India's cultural heritage will enable the Indian people to cast off the chilly grip of a dead past. It will embolden them to face the ugly realities of a living present and look forward to a better, brighter and pleasanter future.

The transmigration of soul and the law of *karma* are the fundamental articles of faith with the vast bulk of the Indian people. The entire religious mode of thought, which still dominates the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of our country, is rested on those twin-pillars. Modern education and penetration of scientific knowledge are challenging the religious mode of thought. Yet, prejudice dies hard. The efforts made even by people with modern scientific education to rationalise the religious mode of thought is only a matter of prejudice. A criticism of religious thought, subjection of traditional beliefs and the time-honoured dogmas of religion to a searching analysis, is a condition for the belated Renaissance of India. The spirit of enquiry should overwhelm the respect for tradition. The essays collected in this volume are expected to quicken that spirit.

Superstition is rooted in the ignorance of the primitive man. In course of time, man outgrows the blissful state of ignorance. Nevertheless, he is haunted by superstitions haloed by tradition, and often raised to the dignity of the expression of revealed wisdom. Eventually, scientific knowledge gives him the power to break the spiritual bondage. The history of the development of science coincides with the history of a bitter struggle against superstition. In our country, the struggle is still to begin. Whatever little of modern scientific knowledge is now there, is very largely superficial, and is often utilised with the purpose of

reinforcing superstitions. That is an abuse of science.

These essays are bound to provoke an outburst of criticism. But that will not be serious criticism; it will be an arrogant condemnation of the scientific spirit and scientific knowledge. At the same time, the purpose of initiating an organised struggle against superstition will be served. The clay feet of a number of time-honoured gods are exposed by these essays. Fatalism and blind faith have killed in the bulk of the Indian people the incentive for knowledge and progress. The root of this evil can be traced to the doctrine of the transmigration of soul. Therefore, the exposure of the fallacy of this doctrine is a historical necessity. It is necessary not only for the material progress, but also for the spiritual liberation of the Indian people.

A critique of the cult of "religious experience" is equally necessary. That requires not only some knowledge of modern psychology, but good deal of moral courage. Because, in the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of our country, it amounts almost to heresy. How superstition treats the heretic, is a dreadful tale. Nevertheless, the heretics are harbingers of real spiritual progress. In this book, the psycho-pathological foundation of the cult of "religious experience" has been exposed. The sanction for India's "spiritual message" is derived from that doubtful source of ins-



piration. Once that is realised, unwarranted arrogance may be replaced by a commendable modesty.

A critique of the ideology of orthodox nationalism may impel the spirit of a renascent India to outgrow the obsession with antiquated ideas and faded ideals, and transcend the narrow limits of a political vision clouded by a racial conception of culture. National independence would be of little significance if it did not let in the invigorating influence of a cosmopolitan outlook and humanist culture.

These essays, which record the reflections of a solitary prisoner, are published with the purpose of provoking thought. They indicate an approach to the difficult problem of overcoming the age-long tyranny of superstition glorified as India's spiritual genius. The past is dead; it must be buried. India must experience a renaissance—spiritual re-birth. Conditions conducive for that purpose must be created. These critical studies may make some modest contribution in that respect.

*Dehradun.*

M. N. Roy.

# **I N D I A ' S   M E S S A G E**



## CHAPTER I

### THE TRANSMIGRATION OF SOUL

THERE is a new excitement among the inmates of this little world of ours. Not exactly an excitement. It is rather a commotion—a futile flutter. Excitement is an emotion caused by events which directly affect ourselves intimately. Nothing like that has happened. Only a story from beyond the walls has filtered in, and everybody is repeating it with some additional embellishing touches. It is surprising how stories do reach us in this segregated world with all its paraphernalia of rigid watch and ward. However, whenever they break through the blockade, they spread like wild fire, to the edification of solitary souls hungry for information. Particularly, when the stories are of the nature that stimulates idle fancy or feeds general credulity. Some of the warders would pick one up in the neighbouring bazar, and pass it on in a distorted or magnified form. Or some prisoners employed in the office might get snatches of some conversation among the clerks. The particular story causing the present commotion seems to have emanated from this source, which is usually

## FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY

regarded by the prisoners as beyond all possible doubt. It is said to be causing a little storm even in the greater world beyond the walls. It is about a girl remembering the events of her past life so vividly as to give yet another knock-out blow to those who, corrupted by the influence of the materialist West, question the truth of the transmigration of soul.

The story comes from holy Muttra. Can you possibly disbelieve anything that is reported to have happened in that place where countless miracles were performed by Lord Krishna when he was a naughty boy or an amorous adolescent? Here is the story as I could piece it together. It is usually related many times a day, accompanied with so many pious exclamations that, to get at what is supposed to be its sub-stratum of fact, is extremely difficult. It is marvellous how tenacity of belief can become the measure of accuracy; and the blinder the faith, the more tenacious it is.

The centre of the story, Shanti Devi, was born, presumably for the millionth time or thereabouts, nine years ago, the daughter of a Brahmin resident of a place in the neighbourhood of Delhi. It is reported that, for some time, she has been urging her parents to take her to Muttra where she claims to have lived her previous life. In the beginning, the parents, so they say, did not

pay any heed to her assertion and request. But presently her claim became known to others outside the family. A number of local gentlemen formed themselves into a "Committee of Investigation," and took the girl to Muttra. There she is reported to have performed the following miraculous acts. On the station platform, she recognised a local Brahmin resident as her husband of the former life ; on the way, from a crowd of spectators, she picked out an old gentleman as her previous father-in-law ; she directed the Investigating Committee to the house she had lived in her last life ; she showed intimate acquaintance with the lay-out of the house ; she indicated the *ghat* on the Jumna where she used to bathe ; she, of course, manifested great tenderness to the young son of her former husband ; the latter reported that his wife had died nine years ago at the birth of that boy. Now, in the face of all these facts, who can doubt the truth of the transmigration of soul ?

The Committee, composed of gentlemen firmly convinced of the truth, naturally had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Shanti Devi's story had been completely borne out by facts. The conclusion was reported publicly in the press and from the platform. Shanti Devi herself appeared in public meetings, and related her story which was then corroborated by one or the other mem-

ber of the Investigating Committee. Enthusiastic defenders of Hindu culture rushed to the press jeering at the pretensions of modern science and ridiculing the hocus-pocus of new-fangled psychology. Science was dared to take up the challenge thrown down by the nine-years old heroine who had never heard of such strange names as physics and psychology ; her acquaintance with the three R's is most probably still to be made, if she would ever be contaminated by these symbols of wicked worldliness. The aggressive apostles of cultural nationalism themselves are rather subjects of psychiatric and psycho-analytical study than competent critics of modern science.

Having heard the story repeated time and again, I naturally turned it over and over in my mind. What interested me was not so much the question of transmigration. I am indifferent to the question. Once upon a time, man had reason to invent a soul ; they must believe in their own invention. There are those, who, having known better, are scornful of antiquated toys. Their disbelief is vehemently condemned or loftily deplored by others. I do not share the belief in truths *invented* by man when he was incapable of *discovering* objective truths. Truths discovered are a different matter. Being physical facts, they belong to the world of reality. I define truth as a physical fact. That requires a word of expla-

nation. The term "physical" includes biological as well as mental. This is a sound statement incontestable scientifically. Metaphysicians may resent it ; but resentment or dogmatic assertion is no logic. Man's gods are made after their own image. I have no more respect for gods than for their makers. Have I not seen the clay-feet of the makers of gods ? So, the story of Shanti Devi did not stimulate me to meditate over the truth of transmigration. I simply did not believe in it, having no reason to fictionalise the fact of my existence. Men are perverted enough to be ashamed of being what they are,—animals. Being thinking animals, they should have more sense ; but most of them don't. So much the worse for them. To possess the faculty of thought, but not to use it, is a misfortune. Therefore, they pretend to be gods—try to hide the facts of their being with a fiction fabricated by perverted imagination. They prefer falsehood to truth.

The subject of my reflection was the credulity on the part of people expected to be more discerning and discriminating. In Shanti Devi's meetings, there sat men and women who could not possibly be blind to the obvious perfunctoriness of the enquiry into the phenomenon ; who could easily raise a whole host of questions that are to be answered before any conclusion could be accepted even hypothetically.



The fundamental question is about the reliability of the evidence. If one simply believes in the transmigration of soul, there is nothing to be said about it. You cannot argue about an article of faith. One comes to believe in transmigration through the simplest process of thought, if it can be placed under that category of mental act which involves reason : Begin with the assumption that there is a soul which transcends the biological being of man. In the strict scientific language, the term physical would be adequate, because the physical being embraces everything that really exists ; however, I use the term biological to make it explicit that the soul of religion is not the sum total of the intellectual and emotional activities of man. Having begun with an assumption which, by its very nature, can never be experimentally established, you further assume that soul is immortal. This additional assumption is necessary to differentiate the imaginary essence of man from the biological reality of his being. As the immortal essence of man, soul naturally survives physical death. And being a disembodied spirit, its tangible immortality can be realised only in the acquisition of a new corporal abode every time it is rendered homeless by the relentless operation of biological laws which it cannot control. Thus, the dogma of transmigration is deduced from the assumption of an immortal essence of

man, which assumption, in the last analysis, has no other basis than the primitive animistic notion of a world spirit.

The idea of an immortal soul is not the acquisition of man when he reaches a high spiritual level. It is a very very primitive idea, its origin being not spiritual elevation, but ignorance. The phenomenon can be observed even now among the primitive races. The aboriginal inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula believe that souls are red, no bigger than grains of maize ; for other Malay races, they are vapoury, shadowy, filmy essences, about as big as one's thumb<sup>1</sup>; in other parts of the Pacific Islands, soul is conceived of not as a tiny being confined to a single part of the body, but as a sort of fluid diffused through every part ; the backward masses of Japan considered the soul as a small, round, black thing ; the Australian Bushman also believes the soul to be a small thing dwelling in the breast.<sup>2</sup>

Primitive people explain natural occurrences as caused by the action of spirits which are believed to appear and operate as (1) ghosts, that is, spirits which have formerly been incarnate ; (2) dream-spirits which have temporarily left bodies

<sup>1</sup> The *sukshma shareer* of the Hindu scriptures is also believed to be of the same size.

<sup>2</sup> Carveth Read, *Man and His Superstitions*.

in sleep or trance ; (3) invisible, conscious beings which have never been incarnate. The conception of the object of this belief, common to the primitive man, wherever or whenever he may live, varies from place to place and time to time. But eventually, it divides itself in two distinct schools, so to say, which have been named by anthropologists as Hyperphysical Animism and Psychological Animism. One regards an object as being moved by the spirit inherent in itself ; the other attributes all movements to an agent which possesses the object for the time being, but is separable from it. Hyperphysical Animism conceives consciousness as a distinct entity capable of quitting the body, surviving its death and existing independently as disembodied spirit. Psychological Animism, on the contrary, ascribes anthropomorphic consciousness to all objects, particularly to the animate. This type of Animism can be detected in children even among civilised peoples. They are seen to hit back at such inanimate things as a table or a chair upon being hurt by bumping against it. Evidently, the doctrine of soul and its transmigration evolved out of the Hyperphysical Animism which has been traced to the primitive man's desire to explain dreams, wherein the dead appears as in flesh.<sup>1</sup> The expla-

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<sup>1</sup> E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.

nation is that on death the spirit leaves the body. Later on, there begins speculation about what the spirit is made of. The "soul-stuff" is conceived as material, though subtle and normally invisible. It is believed to be permeating the whole body.<sup>1</sup>

"This conception of soul-stuff may have been an important contribution to metaphysics. The doctrine of material substance is reached by abstracting all the qualities of things; but then, there would be nothing left, were it not for this venerable idea of something invisible and intangible in things in which qualities may inhere, or which may serve as a support to them. . . . Along another line of speculation, this soul-stuff may become the Soul of the World when by philosophers spirits are no longer conceived to have bodies, but to be the very opposite of bodies; a spiritual substance must be invented to support their qualities, in order to put them upon an equal footing with reality, with corporeal things . . . but such speculations are confined to philosophers and theologians some of whom maintain (as if reverting to the original savage idea) that spirit is the true substance of material things, at least that material things depend upon a spirit, or spirits, for their existence."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*.

<sup>2</sup> Carveth Read, *Man and His Superstitions*.

For ages, the belief in ghosts remained mixed up in popular mind with the idea of the "soul-stuff". Eventually, metaphysical subtleties about the difference between mind and matter, spirit and body, conceived of the notion of a pure incorporeal, immortal spirit. The doctrine of transmigration was a logical outcome of that notion. However, even great modern metaphysicians bound, for their own prestige as philosophers, to have some regard for rationalism and scientific knowledge, have to admit that the venerable doctrine of soul originates in the ignorance of primitive man. The famous German metaphysician Wundt came to the conclusion that the spirit of the living body is the starting point of Animism.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of soul being thus a spiritual relic of savagery, it may still hold its sway over the mind of the ignorant. But it is an entirely different proposition to claim scientific or even empirical support for the doctrine of transmigration. Whatever may be the origin of the soul, its process of transmigration takes place here and now. If it is an objective reality, there must be some way of observing it. Deny the reality of scientific knowledge, dispute the validity of the scientific mode of thought, and science

<sup>1</sup> *Myths and Religion.*

cannot do anything but leave you with your blind faith. But try to rationalise the dogmas of religion by claiming empirical basis for venerable superstitions, and you tread on dangerous ground. If you challenge science, then, the issues thus joined must be fought out scientifically; you must observe the rules of the game. Scientific mode of thought differentiates itself from the religious mode of thought by refusing to accept any unverifiable hypothesis as the premise for deductions claiming to be objectively true. Scientific and rationalist thought rejects religion not because its dogmas cannot stand the test of science and rationalism, but because of the fallacious nature of the religious mode of thought itself, because of its own internal contradictions. If the religious dare to fight science and rationalism on the latter's ground, then, the combat must be conducted according to the scientific and rationalist methods. If they undertake to adduce empirical evidence in support of their superstitions so that these could claim superiority to scientific knowledge, then, certain elementary laws of evidence shall have to be observed. The method of collecting evidence must be such as guarantees reliability.

There was a statement by a young girl. It is claimed that the statement has been verified. The whole case rests on the assumption that the enquiry

was conducted impartially. But is impartiality possible in such an enquiry? Preconceived notions rule out criticism; evidence given by the superstitious and recorded by the uncritical can never be relied upon. The enquiry into the case was not free from those defects. It was conducted by persons who regarded the case as yet another proof for their belief in the transmigration of soul. The evidence was given by people still less competent to participate in a scientific investigation. All concerned were ardent believers, untouched by the sceptical and critical spirit of enquiry which alone can lead to the discovery of objective truths.

It is not logically permissible to talk of proving the doctrine of transmigration empirically without showing that the assumption of immortal soul has even a hypothetical validity. The doctrine results from the belief in soul and its immortality. The ground of this belief is to be critically examined. Science challenges this belief, and has exposed its groundlessness. As far as it is concerned, the existence of soul (not in the broad sense, but in the definite religious sense) has to be proved before the question of transmigration can receive any serious consideration. Who bothers about the imaginary peregrination of a non-entity? If the existence of soul were not assumed, then, the enquiry into the phenomena supposed to indi-

cate some existence after death would be of an entirely different character. The result of any enquiry is greatly determined by its point of departure.

The story of Shanti Devi, or any other similar tale,<sup>1</sup> granted that its veracity has been empirically verified, does not necessarily prove the existence of an immortal soul. If it proves anything, it proves that memory survives death. This is an extremely fallacious assertion, and particularly ruinous for the doctrine of soul. Memory is a biological function. It is stored up in the brain which is destroyed upon the death of the body. Loss of memory due to cerebral disorder is a well-known fact showing that memory depends on the normal functioning of the physiological apparatus called brain. And everything physiological is physical. The brain is a lump of organic matter which can be analysed into its chemical components. None has ever postulated the existence of disembodied brains. In the light of physiological knowledge, that would be absurd.

If memory survives death as an attribute of soul, what happens, then, to the idea of soul? It is materialised! To be possessed of a physiological

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<sup>1</sup> There are any number of them told and generally believed. Since this particular story became the matter of public discussion, there have appeared in the press reports of other pretenders.



property, soul must be a physical entity. But it is supposed to be a disembodied spirit, and the possibility of transmigration is deduced from that supposition. The soul has nothing in common with the body; it resides in a body, unaffected by its physical functions, as an unattached spectator; therefore, it does not die with the body. It discards a body like a set of old clothes, and goes on to enter a new, unless it has qualified for the state in which it can dispense with all clothes. Now we see that the old clothes stick to it; more correctly speaking, it does not leave them altogether. Because, if it did, there would be no memory. In any case, the smell of the old clothes clings to the soul, evidently spoiling its purity. One cannot really be unattached to something the memory of which is so very deeply impressed.

"Scientific proof" of the transmigration of soul thus destroys the very doctrine of soul. In order to be what it is believed to be, namely, disembodied spirit, soul should not have any memory. It is proposed to prove the existence of soul on the strength of its possessing a property which it should not possess, if it were what it is believed to be. In other words, trying to prove transmigration "scientifically," you only succeed in disproving the existence of a disembodied spirit. This is a curious procedure—like cutting the branch on which you sit.

The originators of the doctrine of soul postulated the *sukshma shareer* as the basis for the belief in transmigration. As Radhakrishnan says, "our ancients were courageous." They realised what transmigration involved, and moulded the concept of soul accordingly. The soul as conceived by them is not a disembodied spirit. It is of the size of a thumb. All these quaint and curious ideas are set forth at great length in the Upanishads. The ancients could be bold, because science was not yet to challenge their speculative assertions. Nor were these speculations altogether vain. They had a purpose—a very mundane one. The ancients were laying down the laws of the ruling class. A transcendental sanction was necessary. So it was simply invented. The superstition of the savage was utilised for the purpose. The belief in transmigration had to be fostered for securing submission to the law of *karma*. The object of this is to defend the established social order—to keep everybody in his allotted place.

But to rationalise irrationalism, is a hopeless undertaking. An article of faith simply cannot be scientifically proved. Faith is above proof. What is believed to transmigrate, to survive death, is not a disembodied spirit, but the *sukshma shareer*. So, the doctrine of transmigration asserts that a small *replica of the body* survives death. If that is assumed, then, memory of past

life is hypothetically possible. But here you are definitely on the enemy's ground, trapped with no hope of escape. You are making an assumption which is definitely of scientific nature, which can be submitted to an empirical test. If what survives death is a physical entity, there must be some way of finding out what happens to it before the next birth.

The assertion is not simply an affirmation of the indestructibility of matter or of the law of conservation. The death of the body, of course, is not the destruction of the matter composing it, but only chemical dissolution of this latter. Death is destruction of a morphological organisation of matter. Matter is immortal. But the dogma of *sukshma shareer* asserts that the *organisation of matter* survives—in miniature. There would be no sense in saying that matter survives death ; because death occurs to an organisation of matter. Matter itself is not involved in the process. The idea of survival implies continuation after death of that which is supposed to be affected by the process. It implies survival of the organisation of matter. The body is destroyed in gross form, but an attenuated form of it, an exact replica of the organisation apparently destroyed, remains intact.

This is a proposition which can be put to scientific test. The process of a human organism

dying can be observed in the minutest detail. Indeed, the nature of this process is already known fairly accurately. It is a matter of clinical observation. There is not the slightest evidence to show that at any point in the process a replica of the body leaves the dying organism. To carry over memory and the accumulated store of experience, that replica must have physico-chemical structure, however fine ; and such a structure cannot possibly elude scientific detection.

No, the ingenious doctrine of *sukshma shareer* won't do in this age when physiology has penetrated the mystery of death. It commanded credence in an atmosphere of ignorance about the structure of body and the nature of life. But without the assumption of the *sukshma shareer*, it is not possible to maintain that transmigration can be proved. From the point of view of scientific method, all stories like that of Shanti Devi, no matter how very "authoritatively" told and "scientifically" corroborated, are *prima facie* untenable. A disembodied spirit cannot have memory ; and a physical organisation such as can carry over memory cannot survive death. On the one hand, you cannot prove your case on your own ground ; on the other hand, when your proposition is apparently such as can be scientifically tested, it palpably rests on a false premise and therefore does not deserve further consideration.

The whole procedure is logically fallacious. It rests on the assumption of that which it seeks to prove. If survival after death is proved by "unchallengeable facts", then, immortality of soul and the existence of soul itself are proved. That is the argument. But the possibility of survival pre-supposes the existence of something which does not die with the body. If this pre-supposition were not there, all such stories would be received with extreme scepticism. Their veracity is *prima facie* doubtful from the point of view of scientific knowledge. In the absence of the pre-supposition, such stories could not be regarded *a priori* as corroborating an established doctrine, but as phenomena to be scientifically explained. An enquiry taken up with such an attitude of scepticism and scientific objectivity would adopt entirely different methods.

Recent psychological research shows that collecting evidence is not a simple affair at all. The reliability of evidence depends upon a large variety of factors which are independent of the moral integrity of the witness. Pre-occupation is the most decisive. Thanks to it, people imagine seeing things which are not seen by others not so pre-occupied. On the other hand, emotional or physical agitation makes people fail to notice the most obvious. The actual nature of the simplest and most obvious events is usually not fully

realised by the great majority of those who happen to witness them. Only trained observers with keen intelligence are able to report events approximately correctly.

The pre-condition for a really scientific investigation is to ascertain that what are called facts are really facts. Without this preliminary caution, castles are built in the air only too easily, and are therefore bound to crash under the slightest impact of reason. Once fictions are taken for facts, the rest follows swimmingly. Many people who believe to have seen ghosts report an actual experience. But that does not prove that they have experienced any objective fact. Yet, such "facts"—that reliable persons have actually seen ghosts—persuade many intelligent people to believe in ghosts. Things imagined are seen by imaginative eyes. They are "facts" as long as the imagination lasts. Therefore, figments of imagination, though facts *as such*, cannot be taken for the evidence for any objective reality.

Let alone experimental psychology, anybody who has read cleverly written detective stories knows that observation is not an easy business. To see is not to observe. A few instances of experimental recording of evidence may benefit those who dogmatically assert that the "verification" of such stories as Shanti Devi's is a challenge to modern psychology. I am boldly or

hopefully assuming that they can be benefitted, that they are not irreparably lost in prejudice.

W. M. Marston discovered the method of detecting through a mechanical indicator of blood-pressure, whether an arrested person on examination is telling the truth. The following experiment was made by that famous American psychologist. The experimenter was in a room with eighteen other educated persons—mostly lawyers—who had no previous knowledge that there was going to be any experiment. They were all behaving spontaneously as in any chance gathering—all casually chatting. After a while, as arranged beforehand by the experimenter, a young man, dressed so as to attract attention, rushed into the room, and handed to the experimenter an yellow envelope. While the experimenter was occupied in reading the message, the bearer, as previously instructed, drew out a large knife in a way that everyone in the room could see him do so. Dr. Marston writes: "Not one of those eighteen witnesses noticed the knife! Their attention was on the supposed telegram. When asked in direct examination about the knife, they all denied seeing it. During cross-examination, they became still more vehement in their denials. They suspected that the cross-examiner was trying to trick them into making false statements. Yet the knife had

been held in full view for approximately three minutes ! ”

Then there are the so-called Aussage-tests, which show how really difficult fact-finding is. Students in a class room are asked to write down everything they observe. The professor arranges for a variety of events to take place which the students are to report. The mistakes are amazing, simply incredible. Had not the same test been repeated over and over again in different colleges, with different groups of students, the story would sound fantastic. On the average, less than thirty per cent. of the students report the events correctly. Such amazing mistakes, for example, are made : One of the events enacted was several people exchanging heated words. A number of students not only failed to report such an outstanding occurrence, but when asked about it later-on, denied all knowledge of it. In another experiment, no less than three students described “an unarmed person who had made no offensive remark” as whipping out a pistol and shout : “Stop, or I shoot ! ” Apart from these singularities which can be explained by modern psychology, the average result is that in no case out of hundred-and-fifty events to be observed more than forty-one are correctly described. The most disturbing factor of pre-occupation is eliminated from all these experiments. The events enacted are all of the



ordinary mechanical sort, which are not likely to touch off some pre-occupied idea. The students are eager to demonstrate their power of concentration necessary for accurate observation. Yet the reports are so very defective ! While the mind is attracted by one particular event, others happen which may or may not enter the consciousness of all present on the scene. That greatly depends on the circumstances and the mental make-up of the observers.

I wonder if the enthusiasts about such "demonstrations" as the case of Shanti Devi are able to learn anything from these experimental tests of the reliability of eye-witnesses. So, I must put the point bluntly. The "verification" of the story is not reliable ; it has no scientific validity ; the report of the expedition to Muttra does not prove anything. The evidence of the Committee of Investigation is to be taken with a very large grain of salt. This does not imply any aspersion on the integrity and truthfulness of the gentlemen concerned. The scepticism is justified by the demonstrated fact that reports of thoroughly honest and intelligent eye-witnesses are seldom reliable. Instead of telling the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, they are never more than partially true and often altogether false. Therefore, no deduction from such evidence can be scientifically valid.

What are the "facts" of this particular case?

(1) The girl is reported to have picked out of a crowd several persons and identified them as her husband, father-in-law, etc. in the former life ; (2) she is reported to have directed the investigators to the house where she claims to have lived in her previous life ; (3) she is reported to have given clear evidence of familiarity with the house. There are other details. But these are the salient "facts."

Now, think of the circumstances under which these "facts" were found. It was previously known at Muttra that the Committee was coming. Those picked out by the girl as her former relatives were previously informed of the story in which they subsequently figured so prominently and honourably. Yes, honourably ; that's the crucial point which upsets the balance of any possible objectivity or impartiality.

The Committee was received at the station by a crowd eager to see a miracle performed. It was, therefore, in a state of great emotional excitement, which does not tolerate caution, and rules out criticism. In short, pre-occupation was the dominating factor of the mental atmosphere in which the story was "verified." How is it possible to be sure that her would-be relatives did not hail the girl before she recognised them? In the given situation, such a possibility could not be excluded. Granted that precautions were taken against their actually doing so, although the

reports do not say that such was the case. Even then it was impossible to control the emotions of a whole crowd. It can be reasonably presumed that immediately on their appearance on the scene, there were such exclamations as "There comes her husband or father-in-law or son!" Such exclamations would be totally involuntary, none would act with the purpose of giving the girl a tip. For the crowd, there was no doubt about the story. The idea that the girl might not recognise her relatives would not occur to anybody. So, why should any one ever think of coming to her aid? The members of the Committee, granted that they were sufficiently critical, would be naturally closely watching the girl, and consequently fail to notice the behaviour of the crowd. It would be quite natural for the credulous populace, already acquainted with the story, to speculate who might have been relatives of the girl in her previous life, in which house she might have lived, so on and so forth. Equally natural it would be for them to believe that only people distinguished for piety could have been related to such a spiritually gifted girl. Many must have aspired for that distinction; and most probably the pretenders had staked their claim publicly. Consequently, the identification can have no value as reliable evidence, unless it was assured that all the necessary precautions had been taken. The assur-

ance is lacking. The fact is that preconditions for a scientific investigation were totally absent. The unreliability of the "verification" results from the circumstances in which the enquiry was conducted, as well as from the method adopted. The enquiry was hopelessly prejudiced by the fact that the story was publicly known at Muttra previous to the arrival of the Committee of Investigation. Having had previous information, it would be only natural for the would-be relatives to present themselves proudly and prominently at the station. One must have a very high degree of credulity to believe that, under the given circumstances, the girl's behaviour was not aided and influenced—involuntarily. The essential condition for a reliable test would be to keep the people at Muttra totally in the dark. This condition was absent. The precaution was not taken. It could not be done. The story was a public property before the formation of the Investigation Committee. The enquiry was undertaken when it was too late to conduct it under conditions which could give the most minimum guarantee for the reliability of the result.

As regards the other "facts", they were "found" similarly under the pressure of circumstances which were all too favourable for the purpose. Uncontrolled movement of the crowd, which previously knew where the house was, must have

helped the girl direct the Committee. Then, in the house, who could guarantee that her actions were not forced by eager "relatives" reminding her of events of the past and indicating places, such as the sleeping room, bathing ghat, etc.? "There you used to keep your clothes, is it not?" The girl would immediately "remember." None was consciously fabricating the story. All concerned were honest—in their belief. That is exactly the point. In an atmosphere of unmitigated credulity, fictions are easily raised to the dignity of facts. Everyone present on the scene was there to see the demonstration of a truth, any doubt about which was out of the question. Granted that the Committee was the exception, it also was the victim of circumstances.

The necessary precautions not having been taken, the Committee could not possibly control the situation. It would be extremely bold for it to assert that throughout the enquiry nothing happened which could influence the girl's actions. Should the Committee make such assertion, it would be testifying against its own objectivity. Then, as far as I know, not a single member of the Committee was sceptical about the doctrine of soul and the belief in life after death. That fact alone is sufficient to disqualify the gentlemen for the undertaking.

You cannot put your own faith to test. That

is psychologically impossible. The desire to test it signifies that the faith is lost. As long as you believe a thing to be true, you don't feel the necessity of verifying it. If you do so, that is with the purpose of convincing others who do not share your belief. There is sufficient reason to think that that was the purpose of the investigation. Indeed, it was not investigation, but verification. Investigation pre-supposes scepticism. There was a concrete instance of transmigration. The proposition was to verify it so as to adduce empirical evidence in support of the doctrine. Obviously, the Committee was prejudiced. Its object was not to find facts—to ascertain if what appeared in the story as facts, were really facts. Its object was to prove that the story was true.

Apart from these psychological and methodological considerations, there are other grounds for doubting that the enquiry was conducted with rigour. There are discrepancies in the details of different reports. The Committee's report avoids these details. But pressmen deal with them, and in doing so, expose that the whole affair was rather a procession to celebrate a miracle than an enquiry for checking up the veracity of assertions made by an illiterate female infant.

Thus, from the scientific point of view, the verification *does not prove anything more than the tenacity of the belief in transmigration.* But

tenacity of belief is not the test of its truth. Obviously, the story was not put to a test. The report of the Committee is worthless as evidence. It may be respected as a declaration of faith ; but as a challenge to science, it is ridiculous. The pretentious challengers have not observed the elementary rules of the game, being blissfully ignorant of the elementary principles of scientific enquiry. It is amusing that even now clever people are seriously talking of a "scientific investigation" of the question. It does not occur to these "scientific" believers that the data for this proposed investigation, namely, the report of the Committee, are scientifically worthless. Nor is it possible any longer to verify the data. It is too late to create conditions necessary for a scientific enquiry. Any scientific investigation into the question of transmigration must begin with some other story. Then, the first condition must be that the story does not spread before it is put to a rigorously controlled test.

It is rather surprising that so much excitement has been caused by this particular story. It is by no means a singular phenomenon. Tales of people remembering events of past life are frequently told in this country. They are of common currency—even among the modern educated. But never before was there any organised verification enacted. This particular story

does not seem to be any different from others ; it does not offer any clearer or more conclusive evidence in support of the belief in transmigration. Even now one reads in the press reports of new phenomena. Why the scope of investigation is not extended? Why rest your case on data that cannot stand the test of criticism, and stick to a story that can no longer be subjected to a new verification? The "scientific" defenders of the doctrine of transmigration seem to be afraid of going too far afield.

Anybody with some scientific education knows that these stories are bred in the cess-pool of superstition ; and that, given the atmosphere of rank credulity, in which they thrive, they do not offer any basis for a rigorous scientific investigation. Every instance of superstition cannot be regarded as upsetting the theories of science established on the solid foundation of systematic observation and rigorous experiments. A scientific enquiry must start from a plausible hypothesis ; and for an enquiry, to be conducted according to the scientific method, the hypothesis must be *scientifically* plausible. The only hypothesis that could be plausibly set up on the *prima facie* evidence of the current stories, including the present one, is 'that memory survives death of the body. But this hypothesis is not scientifically plausible, because it is excluded by the definite



knowledge that no such physical organisation as can carry memory, survives the biological event called death.

So, no enquiry would be scientific if it started from the acceptance of the stories on their face-value. It is necessary to go a step backward. The point of departure should be a critical attitude towards the stories themselves.

If somebody announces the discovery of some hitherto unknown phenomenon, such as water freezing on fire, or a man with three legs, or a stone floating on water, which, if verified, would invalidate this or that scientific theory, the first thing to be done is to ascertain the reliability of the discoverer. It is not a question of moral integrity, but of intellectual ability and the psychological state in which the discovery was made. How did he make the discovery? Where did he see the phenomenon described? Was he previously acquainted with the scientific theory which is apparently contradicted by his discovery? What was his attitude towards this theory? Did he really see the phenomenon, or is he repeating a hear-say? Is he capable of scrutinising, and correctly reporting? Is he not susceptible to hallucinations? These are some of the questions that must be satisfactorily answered before the discovery could be taken seriously, and its verification considered worthwhile.

The stories about transmigration should be subjected to similar scrutiny before they could be taken for the basis of any scientific investigation. Shanti Devi's story was not so scrutinised. One might indignantly demand: Why should we think that a little girl had fabricated such an elaborate story? But there are different ways of looking at a thing. It could be asked, not indignantly, but with more pertinence: How could a story told by a mere child, born and brought up in an atmosphere of superstition, be taken on its face-value? Is it not conceivable that the story was fabricated by others and put in her mouth? The fabrication could be done unconsciously; it would be a fabrication none the less. I do not assert that it *was* fabricated, but suggest that such stories *can* be mere fabrications. And that was a vital point to be looked into.

How did the story originate? Did the parents of the child and others who claim to have it first, previously believe in transmigration? Undoubtedly they did. That being the case, the story might have conceivably been constructed on the basis of some casual childish remark. The initial procedure, therefore, should have been a through cross-examination of those through whose intermediary the story reached the public. Such a procedure might have exposed the fictitious nature of the story, and obviate all the fuss made over

its verification. When the data are not controlled, verification may make facts out of a fiction. It is a fact that, whatever might have been the genesis of the story, the people initially concerned with it are firm believers in transmigration. This fact alone provides sufficient ground for the assumption that, by the time it reached the public, the story must have been highly coloured by the imagination of its original purveyors. The story as it reached the public must be very different from the original told by the girl, if she ever did really tell any at all. It is well-known how tales of the extraordinary are embellished in the course of propagation. The story might have originated in the following way, for example.

The girl heard her parents or other members of the household talk about past life in general. Devout Hindus are always talking of the *karma* in previous births. There might have been references to people remembering events of past life. In course of such conversations, someone might have playfully asked the young girl what was she in her past life. Such conversations would be quite likely to quicken the imagination of the young girl. Whether the girl is temperamentally given to fantasy, could be easily ascertained through psychiatric tests. This is one of the steps that should have been taken in order to

dig into the origin of the story. A child with abnormal power of imagination would be quite liable to spin a fantastic yarn out of suitable materials picked up at random. Having heard fairy tales, such children would imagine seeing fairies, and would relate the "experience" so graphically and with such conviction as would assure the acceptance of the story by the credulous. If the story was the product of imagination, how is it to be explained that she mentioned one particular place and some particular persons? There is no difficulty about it. But before talking of explanation, it must be asked if there is really anything to explain. That the original story was so full of concrete details, is open to reasonable doubt. At any rate, there is no guarantee that originally the girl actually did mention the place and persons. Those details could have been interpolated by those who made the story public. But granted that the girl herself did supply the details she could have hit upon the particular place and persons simply by hearing about them.

The only valid argument against this psychologically plausible assumption would be to establish the fact that her "relatives" at Muttra were totally unknown to the family of the girl before she revealed the secret. This all-important point was never touched. None of the investigators ever took the trouble of ascertaining this fact. Indeed,

none thought it necessary to scrutinise the origin of the story. Now then, supposing that the people at Muttra had been previously known to the girl's family, she must have heard the names mentioned. Then, the name of the place, Muttra, is very suggestive of all sorts of miraculous happenings. The girl might have heard that the death of the woman at Muttra had some temporary relation with her own birth, and moreover that she died at childbirth. Furthermore, that coincidence might have suggested to some member of her family that probably the dead woman was re-born as the girl. While dwelling on the coincidence, someone might have casually or playfully asked the girl if she was the reincarnation of the Muttra woman. An affirmative answer, given by the girl, mechanically, or allured by the idea of having lived at Muttra, would start the whole story with all the details put in subsequently ; and that would be done fully in good faith. The story as it eventually reached the public need not have any more substantial foundation of fact. Nevertheless, it would be a mendacious fabrication.

Once the point of departure is given by the whim or fantasy on the part of the girl, the whole story follows logically. Only, the worked out yarn was not originally told by the girl ; it was put in her mouth, but those who did so were unaware that they were spreading a false-

hood. They themselves honestly believed in the story. It derived its "truthfulness" from the faith on the part of the good people in the doctrine of transmigration. Given that faith, the story necessarily follows from the single affirmative syllable pronounced by the girl. If she was the dead woman, then so-and-so, of course, was her husband, so-and-so her father-in-law, her child was still living, she lived in that particular house, etc., etc. What could be more obvious? And it would only be all too easy for the girl to repeat the story as told by herself from the very beginning.

The origin of the story may be explained in still another way—even more scientific. The former explanation is psychological, the latter biological. It might sound rather far-fetched, but it is quite plausible scientifically. Of course, in this case also, the starting point is the assumption that the Muttra people were previously known to the girl's family. The assumption is permissible, because this a point that can still be ascertained. It is not an arbitrary assumption. Let others prove that it is baseless; meanwhile, the exposure of the fictitious origin of the story is hypothetically sound.

But the investigation of this crucial point must be very rigorous. Statements of the parties concerned, however solemnly made, are not valid

as evidence. Independent evidence must be sought. Meanwhile, the assumption of previous acquaintance stands. Without it, no scientific explanation is possible. Science has been challenged ; so it is entitled to offer its explanation, and its explanation should not be judged by the standard set up by the alternative view of the question. Science has no plausible ground for assuming transmigration. Therefore, it must approach the story from some other angle of vision—with the object of explaining a phenomenon. If previous acquaintance is proved (and it is sure to be proved, provided that the enquiry is properly made, because it is practically certain that it was there), then, the origin of the story would be scientifically explained, and consequently, it could no longer serve as a hypothetical ground for the doctrine of transmigration. The story exposed as a fiction, the question of verification does not arise.

Here is the other hypothetical explanation—from the biological point of view. The death of the woman at Muttra might have been talked about by the girl's mother before her (girl's) birth. It appears from the reports that there was an interval between the death of the woman at Muttra and the birth of the girl. The interval has not been definitely fixed—yet another evidence for the looseness of the whole enquiry. So, it is just possible that rather the conception

than the birth of the girl approximately coincided with the death of the woman. Indeed, for the convenience of the demonstrators of the doctrine of soul, this should be the case ; otherwise, the transmigrators would be confronted with a tough problem.

The new organism is "born" at the moment of conception. As soon as the ovum is fertilised, a new organism comes into being. Since the doctrine of transmigration must interpret soul as the *sukshma shareer*, according to it, the embryonic body should be occupied by the transmigrating soul at the moment of conception.

But to return to the point. At the time of the conception of the girl, her mother might have thought of the recent death of the woman at Muttra. Assuming that there was acquaintance, such thought would be only too natural, particularly because the death had been at child-birth. While remembering the death of a kin or an acquaintance, she might fancy that the dead woman would be born as her prospective child. Thoughts or fancies that occupy the mind of the mother at the moment of conception are known to be deeply impressed upon the embryo, and thus inherited by the child. That is the reason for the great difference noticed in the psychology of children born of spontaneous love and of those produced by "breeding machines". That is an



incidental remark. Subsequently, the mother might keep on thinking of the possibility of the dead woman's going to be reborn as her child, and talk about that fancy of hers. Such behaviour on the part of the mother would render it possible that the girl was born with a pre-conceived idea, inherited from her mother, accidentally to emerge from her sub-conscious mind, in response to some external suggestion, as "the memory of past life".

Of course, even then the story would not be so full of concrete details. These would be filled in as in the case of the alternative psychological explanation, but in a lesser degree. In this case, the nucleus of the story would spontaneously originate with the girl. On hearing Muttra mentioned, she might suddenly be conscious of the pre-conceived idea inherited from the mother, and say: "Oh, I know Muttra. I lived there," or something like it. Any such declaration or insinuation on the part of the girl would confirm the mother's premonition. She would say that she had always thought so, or felt so. The mother's original fancy would thus be immediately transformed into a "reality". And the story would be woven with all the details, just as in the case of the alternative possibility. Only, in this case, it would have a broader foundation of "fact". The girl, presumably, had never been to Muttra. So, she could have known the place, lived there,

only in the past life. She says so. Therefore, she must be recollecting her past life. This assumption logically follows from the belief in transmigration.

While watching all the commotion caused by the story of Shanti Devi, who came to be such an object of reverence as to be received in audience by the Maharaja of Patiala as well as by the Mahatma, I could not help being somewhat scornful about the intelligence of the proud and aggressive defenders of the spiritual culture of India. It could be easily seen that there were a number of serious questions which the believers in transmigration would find very difficult to answer satisfactorily.

For instance, why does not everybody remember the events of past life? Inability to answer this question convincingly, is fatal for the contention that stories of rare individuals, having the remembrance, prove transmigration. It is held that the doctrine of life after death is not a matter of belief, of primitive animistic tradition; that it can be empirically proved. Now, empirical laws are inductive generalisations. Human mortality is believed to be a law of nature, because all men die sooner or later. But in the case of transmigration, we are asked to generalise from the exception! That is a very curious idea of empirical proof. Suppose some individuals are found to have outlived the usual span of human

life. The maximum claim justifiable on the strength of that discovery, provided that the data are critically checked up, would be that mortality is not a general law. On the strength of the fact that a few men have lived well over a hundred years, it would be simply ridiculous to maintain that millions and millions, actually observed to die, do not really die! The attempt to prove transmigration empirically involves the responsibility of explaining why everyone cannot remember the past life. In the absence of this explanation, the empirical evidence is all against the doctrine. If memory is the evidence of past life, the general rule is the absence of this evidence. Unless this overwhelming evidence to the contrary is satisfactorily explained, empirical defence of transmigration is a hopeless undertaking. This explanation has never been attempted, because there is none.

The Scriptures say that to see into the past and future, one must be endowed with *divya drishti*. Since the Scriptures are infallible, the faithful must believe that those who remember events of past life are possessed of a power which accrues only to the spiritually elevated. Indeed, those rare cases are so regarded. Shanti Devi has become a minor Saint. The curious thing is that this spiritual attribute is usually claimed, in these degenerate days of modern civilisation, by ignorant people. None of the educated defenders of

transmigration seem to possess the requisite spiritual refinement which would enable them to experience the truth of what they so tenaciously believe in. The *divya drishti* is denied even to our modern Swamis—those proud propagandists of Indian Spiritualism. This is rather unfortunate. Because the fact that *divya drishti* is seldom possessed by those who really possess spiritual refinements, encourages the irreverential conclusion that ignorance and the consequent superstition are the foundation of “divine” powers. And it follows logically that in the Golden Age of yore, there were so many more seers because there was so much more ignorance.

However, the doctrine of *divya drishti* is no answer to the question. It “explains” why some can see what others cannot; but it does not explain why everybody cannot remember past life. If I really had a past life, then there is no reason for supposing that I must have a special kind of spiritual power to remember it. It won't do to argue that spiritual vision is clouded by attachment, by the bondage of the body. Memory is a sign of attachment. We remember things we like or dislike. Matters of indifference are easily forgotten. So, remembrance of past life is not a token of spiritual elevation; on the contrary, it proves greater attachment than in ordinary cases. We are forced to the conclusion that, the greater

the attachment to life, the clearer the spiritual vision,—a conclusion which contradicts the assumption that the common people cannot see into the past, because the effulgence of their souls is clouded by the bondage of the body. The conclusion is ruinous for spiritualism in general. Attachment, not only to this life, but also to the memory of the past, is the sign of spiritual elevation.

It is impossible to rationalise irrationalism. Transmigration is an article of faith, which follows from the *ad hoc* assumption of an immortal soul. It cannot be proved. It is foolish of the storm-troopers of spiritualism to risk a battle with science on its own ground. Theirs is a hopelessly lost cause.

There are still other questions which the defenders of transmigration also cannot answer. What happens between the death and re-birth? How does the soul or the *sukshma shareer* enter the new body? At what stage of its evolution does the embryo acquire a soul? How is the choice of the next body made? These are questions which suggest themselves to anybody not blinded by faith. None of the traditional answers to them can stand scientific scrutiny. But unless these and many other equally pertinent questions are satisfactorily answered, it is simple dogmatism to assert that transmigration is

a demonstrated or verifiable fact. The spiritualist jubilation over the *desired* debacle of science is dogmatism pure and simple. If transmigration and other spiritualist beliefs are founded on the verifiable knowledge of objective realities, why the crusade against science? Science knows no finality. It does not claim absoluteness. It never hesitates to throw over-board established theories if they are contradicted by objective facts. If transmigration could be proved to be a fact, science would be readily convinced. Only, it refuses to take anything for granted. The spiritualists, however, do not maintain that their view of life is scientific. Their point is that science is all nonsense. The reason of the crusade against science is that it dispenses with the assumption of super-natural agencies for the explanation of life; and belief in the super-natural is the very essence of spiritualism. Disembodied spirit is a super-natural category. It is above and beyond the laws of nature. Science can explain, hypothetically at any rate, all phenomena which may defy it. And scientific hypothesis is not *ad hoc* assumption. It is logically plausible and subject to verification. If hypothetical explanations are not borne out by observation and experiments, science simply looks for other explanations. Exceptions do not definitely disprove a law; besides, very often the exceptions, on close and critical examination,

are found to be not exceptions at all. On the question of transmigration, science is not perturbed by the challenge of the divine vision of ignorance and superstition. It can easily expose the fictitious nature of stories like that of Shanti Devi—can reveal their origin in the atmosphere of superstitious beliefs based on ignorance. It can defend itself against the attack of spiritualist prejudice. Fighting science, on its own ground, spiritualism suffers irreparable defeat. Attack is not the best defence always. Sometimes it is simply foolish and ruinous. That is the case with the spiritualist crusade against science.

Science and rationalism, on the other hand, can carry the fight triumphantly in the enemy's territory. Rationist thought does not challenge spiritualism to meet science on the latter's ground. It exposes the fallacies of spiritualist thought, and rejects it on the strength of its own evidence. Let spiritualism take up the challenge represented by the above questions which rise from the belief in transmigration.

The idea of *sukshma shareer* is implicit in the doctrine of transmigration. For one thing, the idea contradicts the notion of disembodied spirit ; it means that the soul is attached to the body. Secondly, if the *sukshma shareer* were a reality, conception *as a rule* should be immaculate. The physical process would be unnecessary. Why

did, then, God give human beings, created after his own image, a physical structure which is a superfluity in the divine scheme of things? There should not have been males and females. The former, at any rate, could be dispensed with. All *sukshma shareers* could enter mother's womb as in the case of Saints and Avatars. What a mishap that would be for the arrogant male! And what a gloomy existence for the female—to bear the pains of motherhood without the joy of love that makes it worthwhile! I wonder how many normal females would relish being virgin mothers. However, nature, with or without the sanction of God, is happily not such a monstrosity. Conception of a new organism is a physical process which excludes the entrance of *sukshma shareer* in the embryonic gross body. Genetics and gynaecology trace step by step the whole process of evolution of a human organism from a fertilised egg. Until it leaves the mother's womb, the new organism has no direct contact with the external world. The foundation of all spiritual attributes is life. The inanimate is purely material. That which differentiates organic beings from gross material existence, namely, life, is a chemical phenomenon. An egg  $\times$  a sperm cell = a new life. Where does the soul come in? If it is a disembodied spirit, whose mysterious ways are beyond the comprehension of science, well, have it that way; but



then the doctrine of transmigration must be abandoned, because this cannot do without the *sukshma shareer*, which evidently is not a disembodied spirit.

There is still another fly in the spiritualist ointment. The birth (conception) of higher organisms results from the combination of two living entities—the ovum and the spermatozoa. If every living body is the seat of a soul, in other words, if the presence of soul brings about the phenomenon of life, then two souls are involved in every act of conception, the result of which is *one* body, providing home for one soul. What happens to the other? Which of the two souls contending for the prospective home, gets possession? How is the duel between souls seeking a vehicle of re-birth settled? A “scientific” explanation of the doctrine of re-birth cannot carry conviction unless these questions are *scientifically* answered; that is to say, unless it is able to give such answers as can stand the scientific test of verification under control.

The two living entities going into the formation of a new organism come from two different bodies. So, if they bring along any traces of memory, that will be only memory of the parental bodies. They, having grown in those bodies, can possibly be the seat of extraneous informations. And science has discovered that parental charac-

teristics, mental, emotional, as well as physical, are inherited that way. But remembrance of events is not a part of that inheritance which may be traced back throughout the whole line of evolution of the species. The previous birth of any *one* human being is lived in *two places*,—the mother's as well as the father's body. It is lived as germ cells which, having no brain could not have any memory. In any case, previous birth having been lived in the sexual glands of two different bodies, the question of remembering the events of a life lived as a human being in the world at large does not arise,—within the limits of scientific knowledge.

Yet another point of fact in the process of the birth of a new organism queers the case of the "scientific" defenders of the doctrine of transmigration. Life is not interjected from outside. It is inherited from the parental bodies. This being the case, souls seeking re-birth cannot directly enter into new bodies, nor can they choose their new worldly abode. They must enter into the parental bodies, and wait for a chance to be born in a new body. But the germ cells are born in parental bodies. So, souls coming from outside, in order to live in them, are fictitious. And what is still queerer is that, supposing that souls do come from outside, each must split itself into two, one half entering the mother's

body and the other half the father's. Otherwise, the duel for the possession of the new home cannot be avoided. But even then, there arises a new problem : Where is the guarantee that the corresponding halves will come together at conception?

Bodies in the state of puberty generate myriads of germ cells, only very very few of which go into the conception of new organisms. In such a situation, the probability of corresponding halves of a soul coming together again in one body, is extremely small. Here the "scientific" re-incarnationist could make a point : That previous birth is not usually remembered precisely because of the extreme rarity of cases in which it is possible. But to make this point, itself not very strong, he must throw off his whole case. He must admit that transmigration is not direct ; and then he would have to prove that germ cells are seats of souls seeking re-incarnation. However, let him take care of his case, and let us follow our argument.

It is known that a vast majority of germ cells are killed off in the process of the conception of one new organism. If they are stored up through the practice of celibacy, which is more often professed than really practised, they don't go up to the brain and increase intellectual and spiritual power. They are generated in the sexual glands. There they remain, creating the natural

impulse of love-life, the inhibition of which is not a way to spiritual elevation, but to hallucination caused by mental derangement. What happens to those poor souls or half-souls whose prospect of re-birth is thus annihilated? They cannot move on to newly generated germ cells to wait for another chance. Each new germ cell is a self-contained living being. It has its own soul, and therefore cannot be the home for another homeless soul. Anyhow, the chance of a new human existence in the world at large comes to only a few, and that by sheer accident. Thus, the great majority of souls are deprived of the chance of re-birth. How are those poor chaps ever to work out their *karma*?

There is still another nut to crack. The germ cells that went into the making of Shanti Devi had been there in the bodies of her parents considerably before they went into her conception. So, the soul of Shanti Devi must have been awaiting re-birth even before the woman at Muttra died. How do you connect the two? The fact (granted that it is a fact) that the woman at Muttra died just before Shanti Devi was born, disproves exactly what it is believed to prove: The dead woman's soul could not possibly re-incarnate in Shanti Devi. In order to have the ghost of a chance to do so, she should have died long before. She was still living when Shanti Devi's *sukshma shareer* was either living half and half in the bodies of her

parents, or possibly reunited in her mother's womb. The way out of this difficulty would be to assert that the dead woman's soul did go directly over to the embryonic girl. This assertion, obviously, cannot be made scientifically. Besides, it involves the ruinous admission that living bodies, not only germ cells, but even a human embryo, can be without a soul. Because, had the germ cells that went into the conception of the girl or her embryonic existence been possessed of a soul, there would be no room for an interpolating soul coming straight from Muttra. Or, why should the older occupant be dislodged? The admission of the possibility of life without soul is ruinous for spiritualism, because soul was invented to explain the phenomenon of life.

Originally, soul was assumed for explaining vital phenomena. Now these can be explained without any animistic assumption. They are mechanical processes, associated with a certain physico-chemical organisation of matter. Life itself is a chemical process. Where does soul come in? It can remain as an article of blind faith—a dogma. Its position might not be so hopeless if it were possible to find some break in the process of embryonic evolution. Then it could be maintained (until science was able to fill up the gap) that the soul slips in through the rift in the mechanical process. In the absence of any such

break, thanks to the self-containedness of the process of embryonic evolution, it is not possible to answer the question: How does the soul enter a new body? Inability to answer this and other associated questions leaves the spiritualists no ground whatsoever, on which they can stand in the crusade against science. When their alternative view is so palpably untenable, except as a matter of blind faith, they cannot reject the scientific view with any pretence of reasonableness. And the scientific view does not stand by the default of any alternative, but by its own merit. The spiritualist view was born of the inability to explain life in terms of the physical laws of nature. It stood in the absence of scientific knowledge. The rise of science sounded the deathknell of spiritualism. It persists as a prejudice. Tradition dies hard.

The great bulk of the Indian people still vegetate in the pre-scientific age. Hence the prevalence of the belief in miracles, in the occult, in the mysterious, in the super-natural. The thin stratum of the modern educated is so weighed down by the ballast of general ignorance that instead of being the bold bearers of the torch of scientific knowledge, they act as valiant defenders of the tradition of superstition. The pompous crusade against science is a vain effort to defend a view of life which must disappear if India is to

live. The belief in transmigration fosters fatalism. Fatalism destroys initiative. Spiritualist culture has taught the Indian masses to be resigned. The spirit of revolt is unknown to them. But they must revolt ; otherwise, instead of saving the world with the message of their spiritual culture, they will themselves follow other ancient peoples into oblivion. To conquer the future, the past must be shaken off. The people of India must have the conviction that man makes his own destiny. Karma, fate, transmigration, unattachment, immortal spiritual essence, Providential Ordinance—all these are ghosts out of a dead past. Let the past bury its dead, so that the people of India may live in a future brighter than the present.

## CHAPTER II

### PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SEER

RELIGIOSITY is not an Indian monopoly. It is more wide-spread in this country than in others because in no other civilised country, the masses are so very ignorant. Ignorance and religiosity are causally connected. Besides, what is called naturally religious temperament, is really a cultivated habit. Therefore, it may persist even in educated people capable of casting off superstitious beliefs if they want. Nor is it a matter of voluntary choice. It is a psychological phenomenon which has an interesting history. Soul, mind or personality is not a static entity. Like any other empirical reality, it also has a natural history. At any given moment, it is a sum total of past experience, the major portion of which, however, remains subconscious. Emotional or spiritual life is largely dominated by impressions and impulses buried in the subconscious mind. Hence the mystic nature of the psychic phenomena.

About the time that the story of Shanti Devi was widely advertised as the knock-out blow to the scientific disbelief in the doctrine of re-incarnation, I read in an American periodical the



account of a "religious experience". In that case also, the subject was a girl of that accursed land of rank materialism. Nevertheless, the account shows how religious temperament can be cultivated, and that mystic religious experiences result from preconceived notions, being nothing more mysterious than auto-hypnosis. Such experiences are familiar phenomena in India. But they are seldom observed critically and recorded as data for psychological or psychiatric investigation. Superstition reads in them manifestations of the super-natural; and they reinforce the religiosity, not only of the uneducated credulous, but often of the learned sceptic.

The account of the experience of the American girl is also an instance of superstition,—a cultivated habit of religiosity. But taking place in a social atmosphere different from that of India, the event was scientifically explained. Nevertheless, in the face of a scientific explanation of the phenomenon, the cultivated religiosity of the girl and others of similar temperament remained unmoved in its blind faith. Therefore, I shall record the account as an appendix to the criticism of the "scientific verification" of Shanti Devi's story.

A middle aged worker of the Ford Motor Works went to a Revivalist meeting with his wife and seventeen years old daughter. The entire family belonged to the congregation. For that

particular meeting, the text of the Evangelist sermon was: "I will pour out my spirit in the last days, and the young men shall prophesy and the young women shall dream dreams."

It was a winter evening, wet and cold. The parents were reluctant to take along the girl who was of weak constitution, having had three attacks of pneumonia. But the girl would not miss the meeting, because she *believed* that it was going to be a great occasion for her. She had made that enthusiastic declaration on the way to the church. Evidently, she was determined to catch the spirit of God and "dream dreams."

As soon as the preacher roused the congregation to a frenzy, usual in such Revivalist meetings, the girl rushed up to the altar and collapsed there in a heap. She was in a trance, described variously in different religions, as beatitude, *samadhi*, *dasha*, etc. Throughout the night, the whole congregation remained in the church and prayed in pious ecstasy. Finally, the unconscious girl was carried home. There, she lay in her trance day after day. The parents declined to take her to the hospital. They firmly believed that the girl was having a communion with God. The proud father exclaimed that the state of the girl was produced by the death of the sinful nature of the body.

Physicians, however, came to ascertain that the life of the girl was not in danger. On examination,

no alarming symptoms were found. There was nothing wrong physiologically—the pulse was normal, reflexes satisfactory. But psychiatrists ascertained that *psychologically* (as distinct from purely physical reflex actions), the girl responded only to religious stimuli. For example, when a prayerful hymn was sung, the girl's pulsation increased; on being asked if she loved God or was with him, there was a faint smile on her otherwise entirely expressionless face. Responding to the priest's call for a fervent prayer, the girl's rigid arms shot up in a supplicating posture, while the rest of her body was irresponsive to any stimulus. She held her arms up in that posture for forty minutes, while all the conscious members of the congregation, though in ecstasy, got tired in ten minutes more or less, as any ordinary person would. That was a "miracle" which was proclaimed by the priest to be a manifestation of the super-natural power attained through the communion with God. Members of the congregation, of course, believed it to be so, and kept on praying ecstatically.

On the sixth day, having been in that state of religious coma for hundred and forty-three hours, the girl finally woke up to make the following declaration: "I seemed to be standing on a cloud with the earth below me, and I had a glimpse of the Heaven. I saw God walking to-

wards me on a white path." She also claimed to have seen the recently dead little son of the priest, "picking flowers along the path, dressed in pure white."

Now, that was a mystic experience which, in this country, would naturally reinforce the religiosity not only of a small community, but of the entire population. The educated would read in it another irrefutable evidence of transcendental truth and realities beyond the reach of scientific investigation. Disregarding her predisposition to auto-hypnosis, superstitious mentality, debilitated physical conditions conducive to abnormal neurotic state (hysteria), in short, her general spiritual backwardness, the girl would be hailed as a seer, a *sadhū*, a Free Spirit, and could easily assume the authority of a prophetess commanding a devoted following, if she were so disposed. And the band of her disciples would be composed mostly of educated people. For, with all their traditional religiosity, the ignorant masses are not *actively* religious. Not being at all bothered by the disturbing influence of modern education, even of the most rudimentary and superficial kind, they do not feel the necessity of rationalising their faith. In modern countries, religion still thrives only in its appropriate atmosphere—among the ignorant, ill-educated, intellectually deficient, frustrated. There, religious mentality is cultivated only

by those deprived of the benefit of modern education or dejected by the defeat in the fierce struggle of life. In India, religious revivalism is rampant among the modern educated middle-class intellectuals. It is mostly by their effort that religious mentality is assiduously cultivated. Therefore, mystic experiences, authentic or fraudulent, which otherwise would be lost in the vast wilderness of mass superstition, receive so much publicity whenever they happen to come to the notice of the modern intelligentsia.

The skepticism of the talented young man, who became famous as Swami Vivekananda, was swept away by the claim of an illiterate person to mystic experience which, if subjected to a psychiatric scrutiny, would be found to be of the nature of the experience of the American girl. In both cases, the claim is personal communion with God. Science has no difficulty in conceiving the sincerity of the claim in either case, and yet show that the experience takes place on the background of superstition and, therefore, though authentic *subjectively*, is not an experience of objective truth. It is mental anæsthesia, self-hypnotism or neurotic struggle with reality.

Predisposition is the condition for mystic experience. One can be so disposed constitutionally, that is to say, possessed of a mental make-up heavily loaded with preconceived notions. Neurotic

condition conducive to the struggle against reality results from inhibition of physical impulses and suppression of normal mental activities. In apparently normal persons, the predisposition for mystic experience can be produced by hetero-suggestion. Even in such cases, the predisposition is there, congenitally, so to say. It is partially overwhelmed by reason. The wavering will to believe is reinforced by the claim to actual religious experience on the part of someone who easily does the rest by means of suggestion. In authentic cases of mystic initiation, the *guru* performs this function, of placing the disciple in the state of self-hypnotism. Latent predisposition is thus awakened.

The content of religious experience, whether spontaneous or attained through laborious practices, is imaginary. Interest is focussed upon a particular image to the exclusion of other objects claiming the attention of any normal person. There is, however, nothing mystic in the experience; it is a psychological state, either produced spontaneously, or cultivated through the practice of auto-suggestion. Every psychological state can be reduced to a physiological state of the brain. Emotions are governed by internal secretions which, in their turn, are affected by emotional states. In psychological states, believed to be indications of religious experience, con-

scious mind lapses into a coma ; the ego visits the dream-land of the subconscious. Neurotic persons fall into mental coma spontaneously. Hysteria is not usually regarded as a religious experience but as disease. *Samadhi* is mental coma attained through practice. It is a form of hysteria. Visions seen in *samadhi*, therefore, are not more divine than the dreams of the neurotic or the hallucinations of hysteria. They are images of the seer's desires. One may "see" whatever he wishes to see, provided that he has the faith necessary for the purpose. The village urchin "sees" ghosts in every bush, because he believes in all the ghost stories he has heard all his life. To have mystic visions, one needs only to disturb the normal operation of mind.

What is believed to be the attainment of a higher form of consciousness, experience of realities beyond the reach of mind, is really a psychological reaction. It is either associated with given pathological conditions as in the case of those suffering from hysteria, or produced by the canalisation of mental activity on one particular interest. In either case, there is a temporary suspension, or coma, of cerebral functions in the neo-mental, intellectual area (cerebral cortex), psychological activity taking place then only in the paleo-mental, thalamic region (base of the brain). In other words, the more primitive, *biological*, functions of

the nervous system gain predominance over what, in the absence of a more appropriate term, can be called purely mental activity. (This term is incorrect and misleading, because even the purest mental activity is expenditure of nervous energy, liberated either by external stimuli, or by the reciprocity of internal excitations).

Rational activity takes place in the neo-mental region. When that part of the brain is in a state of coma, all intelligent control and guidance of psychological activity disappear. The ego is confronted with a chaotic kaleidoscope of stored-up images shifting under the influence of nervous reflexes and mutual excitations. The operation of reason and intelligence thus suspended, there is a return to primitive (culturally as well as biologically) psychological state dominated by superstitions. Mental pictures, created by ignorance, appear as realities actually experienced. Inhibited physical impulses, suppressed desires, are sublimated into mystic images and spontaneous emotions (ecstasy).

So, in the state of beatitude, attained in religious experience, *intellectually*, man sinks to a lower spiritual level, instead of rising high above the reach of consciousness. The theory is that all activity of the conscious mind must cease as condition for the realisation of the super-human in man. Now, modern physiology shows that cessa-



tion of the conscious mental activity is produced by a cerebral coma, and therefore is coincident with the relapse into a more primitive psychological state, wherein biological reflex-action reigns supreme. In that state, man comes nearer to animal than God. The divine *shakti* released by the suppression of the conscious mind, *really*, is something which is neither divine nor mysterious. It is the life-force which man shares with all the members of the organic world ; and that force is a form of physical energy. Man is spiritually superior to other living creatures because, in human organism, there appear psychological phenomena which transcend biological laws holding supreme mechanically throughout the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Before it becomes conscious, life is an *animal* force : not even human much less divine.

If *shakti* is supposed to be something other than life, then it is a mere name,—for nothing. It is a figment of imagination. Human organism does not possess any other empirical category of force than life and mind. The object of religious experience must be an empirical category ; otherwise, it would be nonsense to talk of experience. While the *yoga* system differentiates life (*prana*) from the soul as well as from mind (*manas*), in the Gita, they are identified. And all the different schools of Hindu philosophy are

supposed to be co-ordinated in the Gita. In the second chapter, Krishna says : "Life cannot slay ; life cannot be slain." Evidently, life here stands for soul. The following line makes it still clearer ; therein identical qualifications are attributed to soul. "The soul was never born ; it shall never ceases", etc., etc. Indeed, the idea of soul is animistic. Its existence is deduced from the vital phenomena. The divine *shakti*, therefore, is the same as life. Modern science has dispelled all mystery about the vital phenomena. *Shakti*, therefore, is animal force which in man develops the spiritual properties of reason and intelligence. Religious experience thus is the experience of the animal in man ; only, thanks to pathological conditions, which must be created by practice, if not existing spontaneously, animal instincts are sublimated. Superstition becomes revealed truth ; mental images, born of ignorance, appear as supernatural realities ; preconceived notions take concrete form ; faith manufactures facts.

In an artificially produced subconscious state, the ego experiences the mechanistic operation of the force of life. Reflex-actions of the nervous system, which constitute the foundation of mental life, are rather biological than psychological phenomena. If conscious mind is to be regarded as the obstacle to man's experiencing the free flow of divine power in him, then, the identification

of this with the animal force of unintelligent life cannot be avoided. Intelligence differentiates man from the lower animal. It is the function of conscious mind. Suppression of the conscious mind, therefore, naturally leads to a sub-human, not super-human, psychological state. Super-consciousness is a fiction which really stands for sub-consciousness.

Modern biology has outgrown the recrudescence of vitalist prejudice. Neither Bergson's *élan vital*, nor Driesch's *entelechy* is more of an empirical reality than the divine *shakti* of the Hindu mystic. "Scientific" vitalism ascribes purposiveness, that is, intelligence, to life which is described as a mysterious impulse. There is absolutely no empirical evidence in support of the contention. All the evidence is to the contrary. Except in higher animals with developed brains, life operates as a blind impulse. Vitalism stands on a purely logical ground, having no ontological foundation. It argues that mental activity in higher animals proves that intelligence is inherent in the vital force. Even its logic is fallacious. It leads to infinite regress, unless one stops at Panpsychism or Pantheism, neither of which doctrines can claim scientific support. Besides, consistent Pantheism is inverted materialism. When the world is reduced to one single entity which can be interchangeably called matter or spirit, the dis-

inction between body, mind, soul, intelligence, intuition, becomes meaningless. Religious experience pre-supposes dualism. Individual soul must free itself from the bondage of body, in order to feel its union with the world-spirit. The body could not be a bondage if it did not exist. The fallacy of its logic drives spiritualist monism to an absurd position. Shankaracharya declared Maya to be real! How could the world be real and unreal at the same time? Modern absolute idealism also takes up the same position. According to Bradley, "appearances" are unreal, but they exist! There, then, exists something which is not spirit. That is a contradiction of the panpsychist or pantheist view. Vitalism is unsound even logically because it leads to this contradiction.

However, *even logically*, vitalism has no force as against evolutionary biology. The doctrine of emergence explains how consciousness appears as a "novelty." But the point is that, on the contention of vitalism itself, mind stands higher than intuition in the scale of spiritual evolution. Mind is the afflorescence of intelligence, which, the vitalists contend, is latent in life-impulse. In other words, mind is a higher form of the vital force,—the highest so far reached. May be, still higher forms will be evolved. But for the moment, we don't know anything about that. For the present, the future can be visualised only in

terms of greatly developed mental activity. So, the flow of *shakti*, that is experienced while conscious mental activities are suspended, is a manifestation of life-force lower than intelligence. If there is anything divine in the life-force, it should be more manifest on a higher level of life. Intelligence is the highest manifestation of whatever spiritual or mystic power there may be hidden in life. Lapse into the subconscious state of mind, therefore, cannot be regarded as spiritual elevation. It is a reaction, degeneration. Religious experience (*samadhi*, etc.) is a psychological derangement,—an artificially created psycho-pathological condition. Only superstition can sublimate abnormality. The vision of the Seer or the ecstasy of the devotee is a psychiatric phenomenon like the hallucination of the hysteric or trance of the spiritist medium.

The discovery of the cause and cure of nervous disorder throws much light on the mystery of religious experience. The famous French physician Charcot discovered the relation between hysteria and hypnosis. While treating cases of hysteria, he observed that hypnotised patients accepted without the slightest resistance any idea suggested to them. Further investigation disclosed the fact that the tendency to be influenced by suggested ideas was not produced by hypnosis. It is a characteristic symptom of hysteria. Normal

persons, provided that they are so disposed, can also be hypnotised. But the mind of a hysterical patient is more open to suggestion than that of a normal person. Hypnosis is an artificially produced (as distinct from the pathological), more or less partial, coma of the conscious mind. Physiologically, mental activity is expenditure of nervous energy liberated by external stimuli or internal excitations. Under normal conditions, the mind is occupied with a variety of interests. The liberated energy is canalised in diverse directions. As expended energy is constantly replenished from the reserve put up by the cells of the nerve-tissues, there is a balance of cerebral functioning. Excessive concentration on one particular interest upsets the balance. One particular set of neurones consumes its whole reserve. Consequently, other parts of the brain are not excited internally, while excessive concentration upon one particular interest renders them incapable of feeling external stimuli. In the absence of external stimuli as well as internal excitations, energy is not liberated. There is a temporary suspension of cerebral activity, except of one particular set of neurones which itself is exhausted by using up its entire reserve of energy. Hypnosis produces such a state of partial coma, because the hypnotised person's attention is concentrated upon one particular interest. The hypnotic state is really a momentary case of hysteria

artificially created. Therefore, even normal persons, under hypnosis, are also open to suggestions. Besides, they are "normal" only apparently. They could not be hypnotised, that is, made to develop momentary symptoms of hysteria, unless so disposed. Evidently, the disposition itself should be regarded as a symptom of the tendency to hysteria. It is a fact that only weak-minded persons can be *consciously* hypnotised, although their weakness may not always be apparent.

Hysteria, or the tendency thereto, as evidenced by suggestibility, indicates congenital deterioration of the entire nervous system including the brain. In other words, it is a sign of a hereditary mental degeneration. This conclusion, reached by Charcot, was reinforced by the investigations of Janet who found that hysterical patients could not have more than one idea at a time. That is a sign of mental deficiency. Rational thought is not possible in the absence of the association of ideas. Of course, hysterical symptoms occur also in people who are not mentally deficient,—apparently. Even in those cases, the mind is predisposed to be obsessed with one idea. This is demonstrated by their suggestibility under hypnosis. The obsession with one idea, either "normally" or under hypnosis, releases emotion to overwhelm intelligence. Because hysterical symptoms, developed in intelligent people, who appear to be mentally normal, cannot

be traced to purely physical causes,—to any specific defect of neural anatomy—therefore, they have been regarded by the religious as signs of mystic communion with God. But they can be explained psychologically as produced by the conflict of suppressed emotions ; and emotions are biological phenomena. By digging into the subconscious parts of mental life, psycho-analysis reveals the causes of the phenomenon of “mystic experience.” There is nothing mystic about it ; that is to say, the content of such experience is not some super-natural force or transcendental truth ; it is hallucination produced by the conflict of suppressed emotions.

On the other hand, *psychologically*, hysteria is auto-hypnosis. It is the result of a morbid occupation with some particular idea or emotion, to the exclusion of others. This reverse relation between hysteria and hypnosis was discovered by Liebault and Bernheim, who demonstrated that symptoms of hysteria could be produced in hypnotised persons. Charcot had ascertained that, while associated with all sorts of mental and physical disturbances, hysteria fundamentally was an emotional disorder. Modern physiology has discovered how emotion produces the physical symptoms of hysteria. Causing excessive liberation of nervous energy, too much to be used up in appropriate behaviour, strong emotions produce all sorts of physical dis-



turbances, such as are recognised to be hysterical symptoms, and are believed to be the evidence of religious experience. Lapicque's investigations reveal emotions as purely physiological phenomena. An abnormal state of emotional excitement, which produces mental and physical symptoms of hysteria, is a state of auto-hypnosis. Because, that state represents momentary suspension of normal cerebral activity, and, in cases of physical disturbance, of the entire nervous system.

Ordinarily, the mind, at any given moment, is occupied with a number of ideas checking and correcting each other. One of them may be the predominant. As a matter of fact, intense mental activity is concentration upon one single idea. Hence the exhaustion that follows. Intense mental activity means liberation and expenditure of a large amount of nervous energy. But except in rare cases of nervous break-down, caused rather by physical debility than psychological disequilibrium, exhaustion from intense mental activity does not produce coma. Because rationalist thought always involves more than one idea, it is never concentrated upon one single interest. The very essence of rationalism is the checking and correlation of an idea in the light of others. Intense intellectual labour, apparently dominated by one idea, does not draw upon the energy reserves of any particular set of neurones; the entire brain is

involved in the process. The energy expended is liberated by internal excitements. The supply being copious, it is not totally consumed even when the demand is great.

The distinctive psychological feature common to the hysterical and hypnotic states, is concentration upon one single idea to the exclusion of others, the interest being emotional, not intellectual. An idea suggested to a hypnotised person operates independent of his conscious mind, indeed, overwhelming this for a time. So long as he remains in the hypnotic state, the normal function of his cerebral mechanism is suspended. The process is more pronounced in hysteria, the cause of which psychological malady is obsession with a fixed idea. From this it is clear that psychologically hysteria is unconscious auto-hypnosis. Sometimes it is conscious. Symptoms of hysteria can be produced in hypnotised persons, because auto-hypnosis lies at the bottom of the abnormal emotional state which brings about the nervous and physiological disturbance called hysteria. In hypnosis, the idea is suggested from outside; the hysterical patient receives the suggestion from his subconscious mind. Charcot's investigations, carried on in greater detail by Janet, establish the existence of the unconscious process of auto-suggestion. Since hysterical symptoms can be produced by hypnotic sugges-

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tions, it is evident that the disease must be due to similar suggestions present in the patient's mind, without his being conscious of them.

That is the internal connection between hysteria and hypnosis. The discovery of this connection between the physical and psychological aspects of a complex pathological condition throws a flood of light on the mechanism of religious experience. It reveals the physiology of the exalted emotional state in which the mystic claims to come in sensible contact with realities beyond the reach of intelligence.

Religious experience is a case of hypnotism, the suggestion for producing the abnormal emotional state coming either from outside or arising from the subconscious mind of the subject. But, in either case, ultimately, it is self-hypnosis, that is to say, hysteria. To realise this fact, one needs only compare hysterical symptoms, produced under hypnosis, with the tokens of mystic experience.

Let us take the famous case of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, which was so undoubtedly spontaneous as to impress many intelligent observers and convinced not a few skeptics. At the touch of any metal, his hand used to be paralysed. The cause of that remarkable phenomenon, according to himself, was his aversion to money which he regarded as the emblem of worldliness. The phenomenon *is physically explicable*. It is a reflex-

action, analogous to the shutting of the eye-lid at the approach of an insect, with the only difference that it takes place on a high emotional level. And that only proves the physical nature of emotion. Like all complicated reflex-actions, the paralysis of the hand was preceded by a cerebral process—a mental activity. Money is bad ; its possession involves one in worldliness, which is harmful for spiritual life ; so it must be avoided. This is a whole process of logical deduction. But it takes place in the subconscious mind, completely overwhelmed by an emotional super-structure—aversion to money. That is hypnosis, the suggestion coming from the subject's subconscious mind where the rationalist foundation of his aversion remains hidden. The aversion to money alone would not have the hypnotic effect if it resulted consciously from an intelligent conviction. An intelligent desire to avoid contact with money would not produce a physical reflex at the touch of metal wares ; because intelligence would distinguish metal from money. To regard a coin as a mere piece of metal and consider this latter as identical with any other piece of matter, would be abstract thought, though from the practical point of view it would be false. When the Paramhansa threw some coins in the river, he was engaged in rational thinking. To shrink from the contact of such things as ornaments, whose value

is calculated in terms of money, would also be a behaviour determined by intelligent thought. But it is utterly irrational to believe that the mere touch of any metal is corrupting because coins are made of metal. Indeed, intelligent thought can never lead to that conclusion. The original idea about the evilness of money is totally lost—in irrational emotion. The behaviour, believed to be the conscious expression of a rational idea, is purely physical—a reflex-action. And when it takes on an abnormal form, such as paralysis, it is a symptom of hysteria, brought about by emotional excess. It is quite natural to remove our hand automatically whenever it comes in contact with a heated object; but if the reflex-action becomes more violent, for example, if someone runs away at the sight of fire, or suffers from any physical deformity simply from the proximity of a heated object, he is regarded as behaving neither rationally, nor naturally in the physical sense. In plain language, that is a case of hysteria, and is usually given medical treatment. Similarly, the paralysis of hand at the touch of any metal vessel is a case of hysteria. It is a physical phenomenon, and should have a physical cause. To maintain that it is produced by any spiritual force, is to debase the idea of spiritual force. The essence of the idea is *qualitative* distinctiveness from the material being. This distinction precludes the possibility of any causal relation

between spirit and matter, soul and body. The paralysis of the hand, even of a holy man, must have a physiological reason. As it is not a normal reflex-action, the reason evidently is pathological. There is no direct physical cause, as, for instance, a strong electric shock ; so, it is clearly a matter of psycho-pathology. The reason is a morbid psychological state in which all rational thinking is overwhelmed by emotional exuberance ; an hysterical symptom is produced by unconscious auto-suggestion.

Emotion is a *biological* (as distinct from psychological) function. Therefore, it affects bodily behaviour. Normal physiological processes may be disturbed by emotional exuberance. Abnormal physical behaviours take place in the absence of the intelligent control of neural activity exercised by the brain. In the absence of that control, liberated nervous energy is not evenly distributed ; the excessive supply overflows the normal reaction tracks ; and brings about reflex-actions without apparent cause, such as acceleration or retardation of the heart, dilatation or contraction of the peripheric blood-vessels, disturbance of gastric or other internal secretion, perspiration, profuse flow of tears, muscular contraction (in epileptic fits, cramps or partial paralysis), dilation of the pupils, so on and so forth.

That is the physiological explanation of unusual

bodily behaviours believed to be indications of mystic experience. The emotional state in which they appear is not a state of spiritual elevation, but of psycho-pathological degeneration. Conscious mental activity is suspended ; organic functions thrown out of balance.

Now, all these physical abnormalities can be produced in hysterical patients under hypnosis. If a patient's arm is placed in a certain posture and he is told that it is paralysed, he will not be able to move it. Charcot and his pupils made a whole series of such experiments. The suggestion that he has drunk wine would produce in the patient all the symptoms of intoxication. Given an unprejudiced approach, a spirit of scientific investigation, it is clear that in either case—of the mystic as well as of the hypnotic patient—the abnormalities must be caused by the identical reason. It is the psycho-pathological condition in which suggestibility increases in proportion as intelligence is paralysed either by disease or predisposition. It is a general conclusion of psychiatric practice that suggestibility is greatly increased by checking the critical faculty in the patient. For this purpose, nothing is more effective than blind faith and preconceived ideas. Therefore, religious people are particularly suggestible, the suggestions being inherent in their own mental make-up. The auto-suggestion, required

for producing the hypnotic state called mystic experience, is supplied either by conscious faith or unconscious predisposition. When one firmly believes that there is a world of mystery in himself, and his faith is sufficiently fortified by the bliss of ignorance, he is sure to "experience" it. All he has got to do is to take his faith seriously make it the sole interest of life.

Physiological actions can be to some extent influenced voluntarily. For example, sometimes, physical ailments can be cured or produced through suggestions. But what appears to be "volition" in such processes is not a mental force. It is stimulus to organic reaction which quickens certain kinds of glandular secretion. Even a thorough-going vitalist like Driesch, having investigated these "psychic" phenomena, comes to the following interesting conclusion: "It is not volition, but a kind of imagination to which must be added the firm conviction that that which is being imagined will really come about. And thereupon it happens, and that which brings it about is the vital factor operating upon the body. The things which are here at length comprehended in a scientific form, are some most ancient and others most modern; the practices of Indian yogis and of Christian Science are at the bottom the same thing in a religious form."<sup>1</sup> The "vital factor" is an obses-

<sup>1</sup> Hans Driesch, *Man and the Universe*.



sion of Driesch. Modern biology has exposed the fictitious nature of this old notion refurbished by "scientific" mysticism. In the passage quoted, Driesch himself admits that unwittingly. The events ascribed to "volition" are brought about by the "vital factor"; but we are also told that, what is believed to be "volition", is really "imagination." So, "vital factor" is an imagination. Because, things equal to the same thing, are equal to one another. The finding of recent biological research is that "vital factor" is the name for the electro-chemical process which functions as the "organiser of life." However, the point here is that science has exposed the physiological essence of certain "psychic phenomena" which had previously been taken for the evidence of mystic power, whose cultivation is still believed to be the way to spiritual elevation. In other words, science has cut the ground under a venerable superstition.

Concentration upon one single interest, unless it is of intellectual nature, upsets the equilibrium of cerebral function; an hysterical state is brought about in consequence; and, hypnotised by auto-suggestions coming from his belief, one sees not only desired images, but hallucinations reflecting the conflict of emotions in the subconscious self.

In the case of skeptics, converted by mystic ex-

perience, there is unconscious predisposition which is liberated as soon as the resistance of criticism gives way before the power of pure faith. This was what happened, for example, with Vivekananda. Aggressive skepticism is an interesting psychological phenomenon. It is the manifestation of the subconscious desire to find some evidence for reinforcing the flagging faith. The bold assertion of Ramakrishna that he had seen God was rather a relief (unconsciously felt) than a matter of ridicule for the young skeptic. Skepticism is not positive disbelief. It implies readiness to believe if more convincing evidence would be available. So, the assertion awakened the predisposition to believe. That immediately weakened the critical faculty of the would-be Seer. Weakening of the faculty of criticism increased his suggestibility. The silent suggestion from the Paramhansa that the young man could have the experience of God in himself, reinforced by the auto-suggestion coming from awakened predisposition, placed him in the hypnotic state in which he found what he had been unconsciously looking for. Only, he *did not find anything* but believed to have done so. And faith moves mountains.

An authoritative opinion, very appropriate in this connection, is again pronounced by the scientific mystic Driesch. Referring to the psychological state created by imagination, reinforced by

the conviction that the imaginary is real, he writes: "In this state, suggestion with reference to a particular content, that is, a faith in the reality of this content, is attained without any ground of rational nature. I pass to the other person a hetero-suggestion, that is, I tell him that this or that thing is a fact; and he internally transforms this external suggestion into an auto-suggestion, and is convinced that things are as I have said."<sup>1</sup>

But let us have some more facts showing that religious experience is a psycho-pathological (hysterical) phenomenon. Sometimes, hysterical patients under hypnosis behave as if they were dreaming. They would give informations about the cause of their disease which they could not while not under hypnosis. Afterwards, they would forget all about it. In the hypnotic state, hidden parts of mental life become revealed to the ego. Similarly, mystic experience is a peep into the obscure recesses of the ego; and those dark chambers of mental life are filled with distorted images representing natural impulses, suppressed consciously or unconsciously. It is also like dream. According to scriptural tradition, the divine light in man cannot be described even by those who have seen it. The Seer wakes up from a dream which is nothing but auto-hypnosis. The object of

<sup>1</sup> Hans Driesch, *Man and the Universe*.

mystic experience cannot be described, because it is hidden in the subconscious mind. Modern psychology has dragged out the contents of those dark chambers. There is nothing spiritual in them. If honest mystics, while having their experiences, were placed under expert psycho-pathological observation, there would be much interesting revelation about the psychology of religious experience. Under hypnosis, they could be made to relate the contents of their experience without sublimating them. Of course, on waking up, they would forget what they have said under hypnosis, and would return to the religious ideas which are unconscious sublimations of suppressed desires. And there would be no dishonesty in that.

As a matter of fact, illuminating glimpses into the psychology of religious experience are afforded by the life-stories, historical or legendary, of famous Saints and mystics. The ancient Greeks associated hysteria with sex; the very term implies that. Modern psychology traces its origin to the conflict of vital impulses, one being the sexual which is repressed (mystic experience often results from the suppression of sex-impulse). Whatever may be the nature of the conflicting impulse, all Saints and Seers are well known to have suffered from the same psychological symptoms as mark the hysterical state created by the suppression of sex-impulse. They were all

disturbed in their *tapasya* by the appearance of temptresses, deputed from the Court of the King of Paradise. In the language of modern psychology, they were being haunted by the images of a suppressed desire; they were suffering from hysteria. That was the psychological background of their mystic experience. Suppression of sex-impulse is believed to be the road to mystic experience. Knowing what it leads to, one cannot but regard mystic experience as the hallucination of hysteria.

Nor is it a matter of logic alone. The factual evidence is incontestable. Sublimation of sex-impulse is a typical symptom of hysteria. Women disappointed in love would devote their lives to charitable services or become nuns. Men with similar experience may depict romantic ideals of love in novels or mystic lyrics. These and many others are facts, established by modern psychological research. Even Indian religious life is rich in sublimations; because it attaches so much importance to the suppression of the sex-impulse. The practices of certain religious sects (Vaishnavas, for example) are entirely composed of such sublimations. There are others (Tantrics) who perform sexual acts, not as such, as a matter of physical necessity, but as a part of their religious practice. To make of the sex organ (lingam) the emblem of God, and to deify sex-impulse, are the most

extreme forms of sublimation. To look upon every woman as one's mother, is yet another form of sublimating sex, very common in India. This form of sublimation is associated with the cult of conceiving God as the female (creative) force, or of splitting the indivisible One into male and female principles. (A curiously contradictory notion! How can the indivisible be divided? But that is a different question, which does not concern us here.)

Ramakrishna Paramhansa was altogether obsessed with the sublimation of sex into the "mother principle." Hence his extraordinary behaviour in the proximity of women. The mother complex served the purpose of auto-suggestion to put himself in a hypnotic state. That curious behaviour was a conditioned reflex, developed unconsciously as a check upon the sex-impulse. The mere sight or touch of a woman does not awaken sex-impulse in every normal male. Then, why should the holy man fly into a trance to avoid an influence that cannot corrupt even all normal mortals? That queer behaviour was not a sign of mystic elevation, but symptom of a bad case of hysteria. In his subconscious emotional life, the conflict of impulses must have been very strong. The more fierce the conflict, the more pronounced the sublimation; otherwise, there would be insanity. That, however, does not mean that the

sublimation is conscious. Indeed, in the sublimated form, the sex-impulse is totally unconscious. But it is there—as the cause of abnormal emotional and physical appearances. To heap one's worship and devotion on a female image—on the imaginary “mother principle”—is a classic case of sublimating sex-impulse.

The religious practice of the *shaktas*—worshippers of God in a female image—includes sexual acts. To combine worship of the female principle with the suppression of sex, involves a severe emotional conflict which naturally upsets mental equilibrium, and brings about a hysterical state. All Saints and Seers, modern as well as ancient, are victims of a very complicated type of hysteria. Ramakrishna Paramhansa, for example, lived practically always under auto-suggestions. Therefore, mystic experience was so very frequent with him.

Split-up personality is another hysterical symptom. It is often produced in spiritist mediums under hypnosis. The story of Mr. Jackyll and Dr. Hyde is not a pure fantasy. Hysterical patients are known to develop a second personality. All recollections of a certain portion of life is lost, and the patient believes himself to be an entirely different person. Very remarkable cases of this curious phenomenon, commonly characterised as “occult”, may be caused by the conversion of an

emotion into morbid symptoms. A very typical case was the famous Vaishnava prophet, Chaitanya. It is said that he believed himself to be the incarnation of Radha. In trance, he enacted the part of that mythical mistress of Krishna. Undoubtedly, he imagined himself to be the beloved of God ; and that imagination was the content of his mystic experience. It was, nevertheless, a hysterical symptom, produced by the suppression of sex-impulse which found the morbid emotional expression.

Nature is not easily bullied. She takes revenge which is often spiritually catastrophic, though it may be glorified by the superstitious victims and their credulous followers as token of spiritual elevation. Psychologically, the *stribhav* cultivated by Vaishnava mystics like their prophet, is a perverted expression of sex-impulse—of the same type as homo-sexuality. In this abnormal emotional relation, which is now regarded as a psycho-pathological phenomenon, and medically treated as such, one of the partners imagines himself to be sexually converted. The emotional abnormality originates in difficulties or frustration in finding an appropriate object of affection, which, experienced in the earlier stages of puberty, create hysterical condition. Cultivated in practice over a sufficiently long period, it becomes a physical habit with no deep psychological foundation, and



thus the addict may not suffer from any mental derangement.

But sublimated in a religious devotion, its original psycho-pathological nature is accentuated. Because, the emotion does not find even an abnormal physical expression. It develops introspectively. In course of time, the balance between emotion and intelligence is upset. The whole mental life is thrown off the gear of orderly cerebral mechanism. The devotee falls a victim of chronic hysteria which, consciously cultivated, becomes the characteristic feature of his spiritual life. That is a standing state of auto-hypnosis, and consequently abounds in mystic experience. Chaitanya, for example, would dream (in trance or ecstasy) of being in the embrace of Krishna, or caressing his feet in the classical Hindu fashion ; and that image of unconscious erotic desire would be interpreted as mystic communion with God. There is nothing spiritual in such experience, which is abnormal satisfaction of a natural impulse driven underground as sinful.

The Freudian school of psycho-analysts is of the opinion that all religious symbols are expressions of suppressed emotions, chiefly of the sexual nature. Freudian "pan-sexualism", however, is rejected by other psycho-analysts ; and, although Freud himself cannot be so accused, many of his followers are certainly guilty of exaggeration.

Nevertheless, there is general agreement about the fundamental role of sex-impulse in emotional life. A critic of Freudian pan-sexualism writes : "We admit that further enquiry into the history of the human mind may prove that the sexual impulse has been a great factor in the development of religion and art ; and there are many facts that point that way."<sup>1</sup> Hinduism provides a surfeit of such facts. Sex figures very prominently in Hindu symbolism. It also determines the devotional practices to a considerable extent. But the most significant fact is that even the metaphysical aspects of Hinduism are directly linked up with a prescribed attitude towards the physical impulse of sex.

*Brahmacharya* is the condition *sine qua non* for mystic experience. The burden of this virtue is suppression of the sex-impulse. A natural impulse cannot be killed. It is simply driven down in the subconscious mind, where it becomes harmful. It forces its way out, and influences the conscious mental life in various disguise. The control of instinctive impulses, by itself, is not a harmful practice. As a matter of fact, their *intelligent* control distinguishes man from animal. Organisation of natural impulses into a well balanced emotional life is the essence of spiritual development. That is done by reason and intelli-

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Van der Hoop, *Character and the Unconscious*.

gence. Impulses, useless for, or antagonistic to, such a spiritual development, may be suppressed without any harm. If they are few and really unimportant in the scheme of intelligent life, they will remain quietly in the subconscious mind. The intellectual worker may habituate himself to light meals in order to avoid the cerebral function temporarily slowing down by the use of excessive physical energy in the digestive process. That would be a control of the impulse to eat. But the physical requirement would still be there to be satisfied by the supply of a certain irreducible amount of energy to compensate for the recurring expenditure. Only, the demand should be made through the consumption of such food as might contain greater energy in smaller quantities. That is intelligent control of a natural impulse. Similar process of control can be applied to the satisfaction of sex-impulse. One need not ruin himself psycho-physically through the practice of abstinence in order to avoid the dissipation of energy in elemental passion and lust. Indeed, sex-impulse, powerful and fundamental as it is, is automatically controlled by the operation of other emotions and intellectual occupations. The sex-impulse of all normal human beings, with a varied interest in life, is necessarily controlled, more or less. People with high intellectual occupations are less conscious of the impulse than the *Brahmachari*, who may

not be anything more than a religious loafer. You cannot be really unconscious of an impulse which you are combating consciously. Control necessary for an all-round spiritual development is an automatic process. Only idle minds are swayed by elemental passions and desires. Occupied with things, not directly concerned with the ego, one ceases to be constantly conscious of the sex and other natural impulses.

However, while control (intelligent satisfaction) of basic impulses belongs to the scheme of a well-balanced mind, and minor impulses (for example, desire to go to the theatre one particular evening, or to visit a friend, etc.) can be suppressed, the suppression of, or even the attempt to suppress, a major impulse is positively harmful.

Sex is a major impulse ; indeed, the most fundamental. That is easy to see. Spiritual development presupposes life ; and existence of life requires reproduction. If there is any creative principle, that is to be found in the sex-impulse. The idea that spiritual development is conditional upon the suppression of sex-impulse is, therefore, obviously absurd. The practice is as sensible as to strike at the root of the tree to make it flower and bear fruit. The satisfaction of natural impulses cannot be antagonistic to spiritual development, if the faculty naturally belongs to man. Sex being the fundamental impulse of life, its satisfac-

tion is necessary for the physical, intellectual and emotional well-being of man. Its suppression is bound to be injurious psychologically as well as physically. In fact, it cannot be suppressed. It manifests itself in morbid symptoms, the form of which is determined by unconscious predispositions. An abnormal psychological state is created. Mystic experience is a feature of that state. It is the product of hysteria, cultivated artificially through the practice of *Brahmacharya*. A psychopathological state is purposefully created to that the struggle against reality could be carried on with apparent success. Mystic experience does reveal the real nature of the self, because it is a peep into the dark chambers of the subconscious mind wherein lurk the predispositions and congenital tendencies which profoundly influence all the behaviour of life in so far as this is not guided by intelligence. But in mystic experience, realities about the nature of the self appear in distorted images. Therefore, it is rather hallucination than realisation of the truth. It is a gross superstition to seek in distorted pictures of one's inner self the guidance for conscious life. One should rather try to dig up the ugly realities behind the fascinating pictures. That would be real knowledge of the self. The knowledge of its defects, deformities, handicaps, would enable one to remove them through the exercise of intelligence, and thus liberating the self progressively from the

bondage of unconscious predispositions, set it on the endless road of real spiritual elevation. Science (psychology) helping us to overcome the time-honoured superstition about the nature of self, enables us to find objective truths about ourselves instead of hallucinations. Truth is a more dependable guide to life than fantasy.

Mystic experience results from a struggle against the realities of life. In hysterical patients, the struggle is unconscious, being a product of a neurotic state. The religious man, swayed by superstition, takes up the struggle consciously. It is an instance of what Freud describes as "the escape into illness." In his case, the neurotic state is the product of deliberate practice. Once that psychological condition is created by the suppression of normal impulses and other prescribed practices, the struggle becomes unconscious. Mental life is submerged in emotional exuberance. The ruling emotions are morbid, being not the normal expression, but sublimation of natural impulses. Hypnotic dreams, hallucinations, phantasies, are the characteristic features of a morbid emotional state. Truth cannot be attained by the sacrifice of reason and realities. The light of known realities alone can illuminate the way to hidden truths.

The psychological foundation for mystic experience is predisposition which may be conscious or subconscious. An idea suggested from outside

brings about an emotional state overwhelming normal cerebral function, only when it is such as awakens some predisposition. The subconscious mind is a store of predisposition acquired either through automatic experience or under the pressure of social environment. Congenital predispositions are inherited. By far the greater part of the ego is subconscious. Therefore, predispositions dominate mental life whenever emotions are not controlled by reason and intelligence. This happens in mystic experience as well as hysteria.

Religion is belief in the super-natural. Ignorance is its foundation. Metaphysical agencies are postulated by man unable to explain natural phenomena otherwise. Ignorance is the "original sin" of mankind. Therefore, no people or individual is naturally more or less religious than others. Thanks to the original sin of ignorance, religious predisposition remains deep-rooted in every human being until a very high level of spiritual development is reached. Man's spiritual life may remain befogged by the ignorance of his forefathers even when he himself has consciously cast off the "original sin."

Knowledge strengthens the highest mental faculties of rationality and intelligence. Consequently, it shakes the influence of religious prejudice. Religiosity is the badge of spiritual backwardness. Therefore, the greater the intellectual backwardness the stronger the religious predisposi-

tion. The psychology of the intellectually backward is prone to be swayed by emotions. These are more primitive biological functions, being expressions of physical impulses. Not balanced by reason and intelligence, they conflict with each other—one trying to overwhelm the other. The result is the psycho-pathological state called hysteria. The religious, therefore, are more susceptible to hypnosis. In other words, they are more hysterically predisposed. Naturally, mystic experience is more frequent among them. That is the psychological explanation of the religious temperament of the Indian people. Even when the religious predisposition is hidden by a thin layer of modern education, it is still there to be awakened by some appropriate suggestion. As a matter of fact, modern education creates an emotional conflict in the religiously disposed, even when the disposition is partially suppressed by reason and knowledge. In these cases, the emotional conflict is likely to be so strong as to produce hysteria. For that reason, we have this swarm of modern *swamis* preaching mysticism as a matter of experience.

There is an internal connection between the practice of *Brahmacharya* and mystic experience. Only, the connection is not spiritual, but pathological. It is the reverse of the relation—"sound mind in a sound body." The spiritual temperament more correctly, religious atavism, of the



educated youth is buttressed upon the traditional prejudice in favour of that pernicious practice. (It is more pernicious when only professed, but not practised; and that is generally the case.) This temperament is the psychological phenomenon of "regression" on a mass scale. An unsatisfied or abnormally or partially satisfied desire causes great mental tension and compression of physical energy, seeking emotional expression. Driven underground, so to say, it flows into subterranean channels; the result is resurgence of more elementary forms of emotion. "As the water of a dammed-up river is pressed back and flows into long abandoned channels, so the emotional tension will try to express itself in obsolete forms. Old habits, events or fantasies, which were accompanied in the past by strong emotions, will emerge once more as possible outlets for the suppressed emotion. This process is called regression, and occurs also in normal people."<sup>1</sup> The "normality" of people suffering from this psychological regression is only apparent. If they were psychologically quite normal, people with modern education could not be aggressively religious, and try to rationalise irrationalism, which is the very essence of religion.

To react upon the environment, is the most

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Van der Hoop, *Character and the Unconscious*.

fundamental impulse of life. From an automatic, unconscious, physical process, the reaction gradually develops into a conscious approach with the purpose of understanding. Originally, a purely physical interaction, the relation between living beings and their environments becomes eventually differentiated into physical stimuli and psychological response thereto. The psychological content of the conscious reaction to environment is the impulse *to know*. Religion is the most elementary expression of this impulse. The essence of religion is belief in the super-natural. It satisfies the primitive man's incipient rationalist impulse to know. The significance of the impulse to know is the desire to find the cause of observed phenomena. The primitive man finds the cause in imaginary super-natural or super-human agencies. That is the foundation of religion. Imagination, reinforced by the conviction that that which is imagined really exists, assumes the complexion of "knowledge." The conviction has a pseudo-rationalist basis: Natural phenomena must be caused; they are beyond human control; ergo, their cause must be super-human. Thus, religion becomes a psychological "fixation."

This phenomenon occurs also in the process of individual spiritual development. The race being an aggregate of individuals, its psychological as well as the biological history can be traced,

in broad outlines, in the development of the individual. It is an established finding of modern psychological research that a child's desire for gratification may be so deeply influenced by peculiar circumstances as to remain fixed in its earliest form of expression. That is the reason of some grown-up people behaving childishly in certain respects. Religiosity in educated people is spiritual childishness—a psychological fixation. Thanks to the "original sin" of ignorance, the satisfaction of the primitive man's desire for an understanding of phenomena, which dominate his existence, is necessarily found in faith. That peculiar mode of satisfaction puts its stamp on subsequent emotional and intellectual development. It is cast in religious mould. The twilight of primitive ignorance endures, more or less, over a long period of human development. Consequently, the forms of emotional and ideological expression are fixed by that circumstance. They persist even after the foundation of religion is undermined by scientific knowledge. Gradually, intelligence and reason, fortified by the advance of scientific knowledge, overwhelm those antiquated psychological traits. But they cannot altogether be eradicated at once. That requires a long period of time, during which new forms of expression are developed under different cultural conditions. Meanwhile, the psychological forms fixed in our spiritual childhood, and culti-

vated over a long period of slow adolescence, sink into the subconscious mind.

Now, mental tension caused by the suppression of a major physical impulse drives emotional energy underground. There the old forms of expression provide it with channels to flow into. What is called regression, takes place. This is an abnormal psychological phenomenon—a symptom of emotional morbidity. The recollected old forms of expression cannot be fitted into the scheme of the conscious mental life. There is an emotional conflict which overwhelms reason and intelligence. Cerebral functions are necessarily slackened, even suspended, when excessive nervous energy flows into the subterranean channels of the subconscious mind. The resurgence of the ghosts of old superstitions coincides with, indeed, is preceded by, a derangement of conscious mental activity. Regression, therefore, is a hysterical symptom. It takes place in hysterical patients. Mystic experience is a classical case of regression. It is an abnormal psychological state. It is a symptom of emotional morbidity, inasmuch as it is brought about by the practice of the suppression of the major impulses of life.

The mental tension caused by the practice of *Brahmacharya* paralyses cerebral activity; suppressed sex-impulse finds abnormal satisfaction in fixed forms of emotional expression; that is to say,

in forms determined by primitive faith. The fixed forms may be conscious psychological traits as in the case of the avowedly religious ; or they may lie in the subconscious mind. In the latter case, their reappearance is more plausibly regarded as mystic experience ; because, then the phenomenon appears to defy rational explanation which, of course, it does not. Once intelligence and reason are consciously or unconsciously subordinated to the predisposition to find satisfaction in faith, one sees anything he wishes to see ; imaginations are believed to be pictures of reality.

Faith alone, however, does not lead to mystic experience which is a rare phenomenon even in the religious atmosphere of India. It is unknown to the masses of the Indian people with all their proverbial religious temperament. They are religious because they do not know any better ; that is to say, their spiritual backwardness precludes the development of higher forms of mental and emotional activity. They are fully satisfied with their spiritual childishness. Undisturbed by any departure from the blissful heaven of ignorance, their faith, though degenerated into rank superstition, does not require rationalisation. Consequently, their primitive spiritualism knows no emotional conflict, which alone produces the psycho-pathological state in which mystic experience is possible. Palpably contradictory ideas may

remain side by side in the primitive mind without causing any emotional conflict. That paradox is the mark of its primitiveness. It has not yet developed the faculty of systematic thought, which is to associate ideas in a logical chain.

While for the vast bulk of the Indian people religiosity is a matter of habit, an emblem of spiritual stagnation, in the case of those with modern education, it is a psychological regression. With these latter, faith has lost spontaneity, though many of them are not conscious of that spiritual progress; and those who realise it more or less vaguely, feel distressed and endeavour to stem it. They take to prescribed religious practices which include suppression of natural impulses—physical as well as psychological—sex being looked upon as the devil of the drama. This is conscious and voluntary regression, which produces genuine emotional conflict inasmuch as the desired suppression is successfully practised. In the great majority of cases, it is not successful; but the effort itself is physically harmful. Besides, the shame of the failure creates an emotional tension which is aggravated by the anxiety to hide it. Parallel to this, there is unconscious regression. The unconscious process is more far-reaching because it is rather spontaneous than voluntary. It lies at the bottom of the religious mentality of the educated who preach the doctrine of India's spiritual mission. Modern educa-

tion, provided that it is not altogether superficial, inevitably brings about some psychological change. The process is reinforced by the conditions of life in cities. Instinctive impulses tend to seek new forms of emotional, intellectual and physical expressions. Conscious resistance to the tendency would be inconsistent with reason and intelligence, which faculties are quickened by modern education. But the social atmosphere and cultural traditions are opposed to the tendency. And the mental as well as physical behaviour of man is determined by those factors. The predisposition is to resist the tendency. But it cannot be done rationally. Therefore, the resistance is offered unconsciously. Nevertheless, the result is the same,—emotional tension. Produced by an unconscious psychological conflict, the tension is not consciously felt. It finds an automatic expression in aggressive religiosity, the endeavour to rationalise faith. The symptoms of regression are determined by the forms of spiritual expression fixed by the peculiar circumstances of the past.

The religiosity of the Indian people is a badge of spiritual infancy, a psychological fixation—as far as the masses are concerned; and with the educated, it is a symptom of regression which, being spiritual atavism, is an abnormal psychological state. When through voluntary suppression of physical instincts and emotional impulses,

the abnormality is consciously cultivated, so as to develop symptoms of hysteria, mystic experience occurs in exceptional cases. The goal of divine madness is attained only by a few. Because nature provides guarantees against mass insanity.

With all their proverbial religiosity, the masses of the Indian people are no more given to the voluntary suppression of elementary human desires and impulses than any other people. While their spiritual life stagnates behind a dam of superstition, physically and emotionally they behave, on the whole, like normal bipeds. Thus, religiosity does not upset the equilibrium of their primitive psychology. Thanks to superstitious beliefs, cultivated through ages, they are totally devoid of the faculty of criticism. Therefore, they are naturally open to hypnotic suggestions particularly *en masse*. But that psychological tendency cannot affect their nervous system, the soundness of which is guaranteed by the satisfaction of all fundamental biological impulses.

In the case of the educated also, *as a rule*, nature prevails ; suppression is not practised. Even those who honestly try, mostly fail. So, while religiosity is generally cultivated, and considerable psycho-physical injury results from the practices attempted for the purpose, it is only in exceptional cases that the operation of biological laws is disturbed to the extent of producing full-fledged hys-



teria. And searching psychopathological examination would reveal congenital predisposition in these exceptional cases. Obviously, the determining factor of predisposition is not the "spiritual nature"; because that is shared by all, and yet mystic experience is a rare phenomenon. It is either neurosis, a physical malady, or an unconscious emotional maladjustment. In any case, the Seer suffers from potential hysteria, which aggravated by the suppression of normal impulses, develops manifestly morbid symptoms,—auto-suggestibility, hallucination, trance, double-personality, etc. Since hysterical predisposition involves physical abnormality or emotional maladjustment, it guarantees success in the practice of suppression. Complete suppression, however, is not always necessary for developing an acutely hysterical state. The attempt is enough to expose the subconscious emotional conflicts which touch off the congenital predisposition. Mystic experience is hallucination of hysteria, sublimated by superstition.

### CHAPTER III

## THE IDEOLOGY OF ORTHODOX NATIONALISM

THE common characteristic of Indian patriotism, irrespective of its shades, is the antipathy for the "Western civilisation." The degree of this characteristic common complexion of the ideology of Indian nationalism, of course, varies according to the social background of particular political groups. The attitude, for example, of the Hindu Mahasabha or the Arya Samaj, not to mention the die-hard Sanatanists, is of fierce hostility, backed by sanctimonious self-righteousness. On the other end of the front stand the liberal reformers who stultify themselves politically as well as ideologically by disavowing admiration for a course of social development which they must follow, if they are true to their professions and principles.

The realisation of the political ideals of Indian nationalism will clear the obstacles to a capitalist development of the country ; India will "civilise" herself on the model of the West. In order to outgrow the domination of capitalist interest, exercised directly or indirectly, Indian political aspirations must transcend the narrow limits of orthodox

nationalism. The ideal of national freedom must reflect the objective striving of the masses for social liberation. In that case, India would be able to inherit the great achievements of the "Western civilisation," free from the abuses of capitalist exploitation. Then, and only then, would a critical attitude towards "Western civilisation," *in its entirety*, enrich the ideology of Indian Renaissance. As the situation is, and as the perspective appears at present, all the diatribes against "Western civilisation" are entirely out of place. It is so foolish to sling mud at the moon for its blemishes when you are crying for it.

Between the two extremes of frankly professed revivalism and the self-contradictory attitude of the modernist Liberals, there stands the Congress, with millions of heterogeneous adherents and sympathisers, occupying the centre of the nationalist ideological front, under the proud banner of Gandhism. The attitude of the Congress is the most typical and representative. In spite of all its obvious contradictions, mental acrobatics, unexpected somersaults, "Himalayan mistakes" (which in plain language mean woeful debacles), Gandhism still dominates the ideology of the great bulk of the politically awakened and forward moving (though not forward looking) sections of the Indian population. And Gandhism is believed to be the veritable antithesis of Western civilisation.

A Gandhist need no longer decry railways, motor cars and even modern hospitals as Satanic contrivances. The Prophet himself has moved far away from that original position of pristine purity. Close association with not only the Gujarati cotton kings, but also all the modern magnates of money, and honorary membership of the Indian Chamber of Commerce cannot but dampen the zeal against modern industry. Illustrious patrons of the Congress—Birlas, Bajajes and others of their kind—may put on the white cap, but are the last persons to brook any serious opposition to capitalism. Yet, the typical Indian nationalist, inebriated with frothy Gandhism, speaks as the prophet of a new civilisation. To be sure, he does not know what his pet ideal would look like when, if ever, realised. But he very emphatically proclaims that India does not want to imitate the West. If he only knew how ridiculous it is to be heading towards a goal, protesting all the time that he does not want to go that despised destination !

So unreasonable is this article of faith of Indian nationalism that even people with a more or less decidedly progressive outlook start with the declaration that they are not admirers of Western civilisation whenever they dare criticise the established social customs and institutions. These half-hearted, shame-faced reformers repeat parrot-like the supercilious disapproval of Western civilisation, even

when they advocate the introduction of social and political institutions associated with it. For example, give freedom to the women as in Europe and America, but don't let them abandon the ideal of Indian womanhood, don't let them be contaminated by the "abuse" of that freedom, as is the case with the women in the West; abolish the caste system, but guard against the promiscuity of Western society; encourage capitalism, but avoid the greediness of Western materialism; get rid of religious superstitions and have a rationalist view of life, but don't accept experimental science as the only source of human knowledge. Such is the attitude of the advocates of progress, of those who grudgingly admit that there is something wrong with Indian society, and are distressed not to find a remedy in ancient traditions. They find it difficult to reject the outcome of a thousand years of human progress called Western civilisation. Yet, they don't have the courage to break with the old and embrace the new.

Theirs is the theory of the so-called synthesis, a compromise between progress and reaction; the compromise is to take place on the basis of the "spiritual genius" of Indian culture. The abominable Western civilisation will be admitted into Holy India only after it has performed the ceremony of *Prayaschitta*. The Western civilisation is not altogether rejected; it is only asked to place itself

under the purifying influence of India. The spokesmen of this spiritual imperialism do not know what they are talking about. They expound the doctrine of "synthesis" with a show of philosophic wisdom. But what do they actually propose? An impossibility—harmonious inter-weaving of two mutually exclusive systems of culture and forms of thought, belonging to different historical epochs, centuries apart.

Philosophically understood, synthesis is the process of a new positive category coming out of the negation of something which has previously existed also as a positive category. Chemically, synthesis results from what is called a compound mixture. It is something entirely new, and different from the old, and the constituents from which it results. A synthesis of the conflicting elements contained in what is known as Western civilisation, (that is, capitalist society) will be the rise of an entirely new type of civilisation on the basis laid by the capitalist civilisation itself. The positive elements of the capitalist civilisation will go into the making of a higher form of civilisation. Indians talking of a synthesis propose just the reverse process. They suggest that the "good" in Western civilisation should be adopted by India, to be harmonised with her native culture.

Two functions of the capitalist civilisation can be styled "good", if the term is defined as pro-

gressive, inductive to human progress. One is destructive : Capitalism performs a "good" function when it disrupts, and eventually clears away, the ruins of the mediæval feudal social order with its religious mode of thought. The other "good" function of capitalism—the constructive function—is to bring about industrial development to a point from where humanity can easily enter into a higher stage of social evolution. The destructive "good" function of capitalism cannot be harmonised with the traditional Indian culture which was based upon a social order, disrupted and finally destroyed by it more than two hundred years ago in Europe. It is doubtful that the Indian social "synthesists" would welcome that "good" in Western civilisation. To recognise that function of capitalism as good, would mean wholehogging for Western civilisation. Then, there could be no more wise talk of synthesis.

Those who cannot appreciate without reserve the historical value of the destructive "good" function of capitalism, cannot possibly welcome and avail of its constructive "good"—its positive outcome. Moreover, the latter "good" function opens up a vista of the future which is entirely irreconcilable with a wistful look backwards.

Indian nationalist criticism of the capitalist civilisation is not directed against its real evil—the reactionary, degrading, degenerating features it de-

velops in the period of decay. Indian nationalists reject precisely what is "good" in capitalist civilisation. Culturally, the positive outcome of the capitalist civilisation has been the tremendous advance of science, in theory and practice—an advance which has prepared the ground for final liberation of man from the age-long spiritual bondage.

The basic evil of capitalist civilisation, in the cultural aspects, has been the systematic and persistent attempt to block the spiritual liberation of man, even when it was creating the conditions favourable for that liberation. That was done by protecting and fostering religion (of course, in modernised forms), idealist philosophy and all sorts of the associated obscurantist metaphysical speculation, just when the triumphal march of scientific knowledge was disrupting the foundation of these relics of the dark ages. Yet, curiously enough materialism is held, by the Indian nationalists, to be the fundamental sin of Western civilisation!

As a matter of fact, the situation is just the reverse: Materialist philosophy is a bugbear no less hated and combated by the ruling classes of the West than by our nationalists—the would-be rulers of India. Why? Because materialist philosophy is the mighty instrument for the spiritual liberation of mankind. This weapon, originally hammered out roughly by the great thinkers of antiquity (India had her share of that glorious pioneering



work), has been perfected in course of the history of capitalist culture. Therefore, all fighters for freedom and honest advocates of progress must appreciate Western civilisation as the hitherto most brilliant chapter of human history. To decry that imposing monument of human progress, from the standpoint of an antiquated culture, as the Indian nationalists do, is simply reactionary.

"Western civilisation is materialist" and "Eastern culture is spiritual"—these are the favourite shibboleths of the Indian nationalist ideology. While harping on this theme *ad nauseum*, none takes the pain of proving the contention. It is regarded simply as an axiomatic truth, which becomes all the more categorical, the more it is asserted domatically, and proclaimed loudly. The purpose of this book is not controversial. It will nevertheless be demonstrated that, what is claimed to be the "special genius" of Indian culture, is not special at all; that spiritualism, that is, the religious form of thought, characterises human ideology everywhere in a certain stage of social evolution. It will also be shown that the modes of thought change in accordance with the variation of social environments, and therefore no particular way of thinking can be the eternal and immutable characteristic of any people.

If India clings tenaciously to a particular mode of thought which has been rejected or reformed or

camouflaged by the Western nations, it is not because the latter are morally depraved by nature, and therefore have not been able to remain on the high level of a religious ideology. It simply proves that advance of civilisation (progressive conquest of nature by man) has enabled those nations to think more in terms of reason and positive knowledge than in terms of faith and metaphysical fantasies. It simply proves that changes in the conditions of life inevitably revolutionise human ideology. It proves that India clings to an antiquated mode of thought because she did not experience similar changes. Otherwise, the people of India also would to-day be thinking more or less similarly as the Western peoples. They did so until only three hundred years ago.

The gigantic transformation of the conditions of life experienced by the Western peoples during the last two hundred years has created the gulf which separates them ideologically from the Indian people. Subject India to the same process of transformation, and the gulf will close up in no time.

The great bulk of Indian nationalists exclaim : "Ah ! That is precisely what we want to avoid"; and complacently believe to have proved the spiritual superiority of the Indian culture. Is not the desire itself born of an innate spiritual inclination? Unless Indians were by nature spiritually inclined, how could they resist the temptation of travelling

the road of greed and worldly grandeur like the wayward peoples of the West? But one may ask an entirely different question: Was it by choice that India did not travel that road? Is she resisting the temptation even to-day? The least regard for the facts of history and the realities of the present situation will compel the answer to be decisively in the negative. Even the disappointed jackal makes a laughing-stock of itself by attempting to hide the chagrin in an ill-fitting garb of lofty indifference for the sour grapes. Such harmful self-deception should not have any place in the ideology of a great people in the process of a renaissance.

The proclamation that India wishes to avoid travelling the path of Western nations implies two very important admissions. Firstly, that, given the similar changes in their conditions of life, the Indian people also would think just in the same way as the peoples of the West. This admission knocks the bottom off the dogma of innate spirituality of the Indians. It is admitted that India has remained wedded to the religious mode of thought simply because she has had no opportunity for outgrowing it. The second admission is that Indian nationalism is utterly futile. It does not believe in its own programme. The nationalist movement, the striving for political freedom, itself is the decisive testimony to the fact that the Indian people are just as much concerned with the conditions of life as others.

Political freedom will enable the Indian people to catch up with the progress of two hundred years that separates them from the Western nations. The historical significance of Indian nationalism is precisely the realisation of that which its prevalent ideology disclaims ! Is it not a pitiful spectacle? If you really believe that you are spiritually superior to others, that your superiority is innate, then why bother about other things of life. Being innate, your spiritual genius cannot be destroyed or corrupted by the vicissitudes of the mundane existence. So, your nationalism is a mistake ; the will to political freedom is a deviation from your spiritual nature. Show your spirituality by bearing the cross of political slavery and economic ruin. Either your spirituality is a sham, or your nationalism is a huge joke.

Then, to hark back to history and a legend is a double-edged sword. It cuts both ways. The West, too, can boast of its Janakas, and they are living to-day, giving a spiritualist complexion to the materialist civilisation. If acquisition of wealth is justified, provided that it is devoted to good purposes, can you accuse a Rockefeller of materialism? Does he not spend huge sums for the very virtuous purpose of spreading Christianity, for saving millions and millions of heathen souls? Has not a Carnegie contributed magnificently to the promotion of peace? The list can be prolonged to include

practically all the richest men of America and Europe. Yet, those are the very people who impersonate what is decried as Western materialism.

A dispassionate observation of facts unmistakably reveals the essential similarity of the ideals and activities pursued in the daily life of all peoples irrespective of the geographical location of their habitats. The apparent diversity is only a form. The great bulk of the Indian people are also concerned mainly with the material things of life. Not for enjoyment, but as a matter of necessity. It is not only the case to-day, it has been so always. And the culture of a people, after all, is to be judged by the standard of its bulk. High-sounding phrases or pet doctrines, invented by the "intellectual elite", do not reflect the real ideology of a people. Even intellectuals themselves, in practical life, are obliged to come down from the giddy altitude of their ideals. The great majority of Indian intellectuals are ardent believers in the spiritual superiority of their race. They are eloquent defenders of the "Aryan" ideals of life. They are convinced, by some queer and questionable process of reasoning, that such noble qualities as the spirit of sacrifice, sincerity, purity of mind, etc., are Indian monopolies. They cherish the day-dream of participating in the mission of India to save the tormented humanity from the sin of materialism. This all sounds so beautiful, and it is so exhilarating to re-

peat it with a ring of conviction. But what, after all this moonshine, is the ideal the Indian intellectuals actually pursue? To get a semblance of education, not for the sake of education, but for its market value; to equip themselves with the object of acquiring worldly goods. Do the youth of the materialist West pursue any different ideal?

If the concern for the physical necessities of life is "materialism", the peoples of the West are no more to be blamed than the Indian for performing what is only a biological function. No rational person can ever dispute the fact that to subsist and reproduce are the essential functions of every organism. The human being naturally tries to perform these basic biological functions under the most favourable conditions. The ability to create such conditions, and to improve them progressively, separates man from the lower animals; that is to say, hankering for comfort is a biological urge. Anyone who would dispute the view must defend the absurd proposition that the cave-dweller is the ideal human being.

But the opponents of materialism, of course, do not stretch their spiritualism to such an obviously absurd extent, although logically they should. Because, who is to determine where the line is to be drawn? Once the biological necessity is admitted, any limit to it can be set only arbitrarily. In spite of all humbug, there is scriptural evidence

that materialism, in the sense of the desire to subsist, reproduce and acquire worldly goods, is not against the genius of Indian culture. According to the scriptures, the object of human life is fourfold : *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Sandwiched piously in between *Dharma* and *Moksha*, *Artha* and *Kama* do not cease to mean what they are. The fact remains that the acquisition of worldly goods as well as sexual enjoyment was not only sanctioned scripturally, but was recognised as the object of human life, on equal footing with religion and salvation. Enjoyment in general is the broad interpretation of the term *Kama* given by all the commentators.

The Mahabharat contains the most elaborate and comprehensive exposition of *Dharma*. The closing verse of the Epic declares: "*Artha* and *Kama* are derived from *Dharma*." This very significant declaration is put in the mouth of Vyasa. The divine inspiration of that saintly law-giver of ancient India was the sanction for the codes of *Dharma* formulated in the Mahabharat. The injunction is : Be religious, and you will have all the pleasures of the world. The materialistic essence of Indian spiritualism is evident. What is still more significant is that the saintly injunction is associated with a note of exasperation: "But none listens to me." In the very "Golden Age" of Indian history the pursuit of *Artha* and *Kama* was

not even restricted by *Dharma*. The prevalent "materialism" must have exasperated the saintly law-giver.

One of the charges commonly hurled against the Western civilisation is that of sexuality. On this point again, Indian sanctimoniousness is borne out neither by present practice nor by past theories. In fact, ancient and mediaeval literature of no other country is so full of erotics as that of India. Leave aside the classical example of the mediæval Vaishnava and the ancient Bhagavata cults; the Brahma Sutras themselves lay down: "The sexual instinct is germinal in the child, and obtains full expression when the proper age comes. So....." It is not at all difficult to reconstruct the conclusion left unsaid. It must be, since sex is a natural instinct, it is to be enjoyed; the *Dharma* sanctions it. According to the Gita also, God operates as "the rightful desire (*Kama*) in all creatures." Rightful—that is, according to *Dharma*. But in spite of such an admirably liberal interpretation, *Dharma* was superceded by the other ideals of human life even in the Golden Age of Indian history.

At the end of the Mahabharat, Vyasa informs that *Dharma* was generally disregarded. *Dharma* evidently meant social codes which, in a backward stage of human development, are defined everywhere in religious terms, and remain in operation on the authority of some divine or heavenly sanc-



tions. One must acquire worldly goods, satisfy the sexual urge, and enjoy the pleasure of physical life generally, but under certain conditions—governed by the laws of the established society.

Does the daily life in the materialist West fall short of this ideal? None but a raving maniac, utterly ignorant of the subject under discussion, would venture an answer in the affirmative. Highway robbery as a means of acquiring wealth and the caveman's method of winning his mate are no more practised in the Western countries than in India. The peoples of Europe and America pursue the objects of *Artha* and *Kama* just as much governed by *Dharma* as the Indians. And essentially, there is little difference in what they respectively accept as the legitimate limitations to their pursuits. In the last analysis, the limitations, be they in the form of the Hindu Samhitas or generally accepted moral codes or the civil law, can be reduced to the good old Mosaic Ten Commandments.

As regards the fourth object, *Moksha*, the average European or American is a Christian, and is as true to his religious belief as the average Indian is to his. It is simply impertinent to maintain that the average Westerner is hypocritical about his religious beliefs, whereas the average Indian is sincere. There is absolutely no evidence in support of this amazing contention, so often made light-heartedly. Salvation of the soul is a

cardinal principle also of Christianity, and an average European or American Christian, by virtue of being better educated, is able to follow his faith more intelligently than the average Indian whose religion is but a bundle of superstitions and habits. *Moksha* has practically vanished from the latter's religious vision. The struggle for the bare physical existence cruelly governs his whole being, with *Kama*, often in very unappetising forms, dominating the dark corners. Shackles of antiquated social codes, such as the caste regulations together with the civil laws of the British Government, have taken the place of *Dharma*—the limitation of the pursuit of the two basic objects of human life.

The more reasonable protagonist of spiritualism would come forward with the rejoinder : Granted that the above picture depicts the reality of the situation, it only proves a certain degree of degeneration of our culture ; the object of Indian nationalism is to arrest the deplorable process, and revive our spiritual culture as the model for the world. The present failing to prove the case, the evidence for the spiritual superiority of Indian culture is to be discovered in the past. Before *Dharma* degenerated under the impact of Western materialism, *Moksha* shone as the guiding star of life, and *Artha* and *Kama* occupied but minor places in the life of the Hindu. That is the contention. Historically, it is simply not true. Even the legends of the Epics,

unscientifically accorded the dignity of history, do not corroborate the contention. The best traditions of Indian culture go back to the beef-eating and soma-drinking Brahmins of the Vedic age. The Epics are full of descriptions of royal courts vying with each other as regards grandeur, luxury and vain glory. Even when *Dharma* was pure, and *Moksha* did not vanish from the vision of life, *Artha* and *Kama* were not despised. They were certainly enjoyed, if not actually worshipped. But you do worship what you enjoy, if worship has any meaning. The quintessence of the *Dharma* of India in her Golden Age is contained in the Santi Parva of the Mahabharat. Read it to find how eager even the Brahmins were to acquire worldly goods.

If the talk of a few is to be taken for the evidence about an entire community, then Europe and specially America deserve the palm of spirituality on the strength of the army of priests vociferously preaching Christian virtues from numerous pulpits. And Christian virtues have no reason to be ashamed before the "Aryan" ideals of life. It would be staking an absurd claim to contend that similar conceptions of God, soul and other spiritual categories might have greater regenerating values when stated in the Indian scriptures. It would be equally illogical and damaging for the very doctrine of spirituality to assert that Christianity was

corrupted by materialism, whereas extra-mundane notions of life proved immune to such degeneration in India. If spiritual categories are what they are claimed to be, they must be incorruptible under all circumstances and everywhere. But if they lose force in one place, and under one set of circumstances, their immutability is disproved, and it is but a logical deduction that, given similar change of conditions, they would go the same way everywhere.

“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” This highly spiritualistic sermon is repeated every day throughout the Christian world. As a matter of fact, Christianity contains all the articles of faith, all the metaphysical doctrines and moral dogmas which are cited as the evidence of the spiritual nature of Indian culture. Christ himself taught: “The kingdom of God is within you.” It means that the salvation of man is to be attained through the realisation of the soul—an ideal identical with the “Atmadarshan” of the Hindus. St. Paul chided his audience: “Are Ye so foolish? Having begun in spirit, are you made perfect by the flesh?” Coming to the fathers of the Church, we find Gregory of Nicea teaching: “Human soul is identical with God.” Finally, one may learn from the greatest Christian theologian, Thomas Aquinas: “That intellectual light that is within us, is not

else than a certain participated likeness of the Uncreated Light in which are contained the Eternal Reasons."

No use murmuring adverse reflections or entertaining doubts about the divinity of the creatures of the Christian Gospel or about the sincerity of the faith of their congregations. On this issue the table can be turned against the Indians just as well. The divinity of the Brahman, the standard-bearer of "Aryan" culture, is palpably open to doubt. The modern Swami can hardly claim superiority to an up-to-date Christian theologian. Only blind prejudice and impotent national chauvinism can brand the Christian congregations of Europe and America with spiritual inferiority to the Indian masses. The former have at least a faith, whereas the latter have only superstitions. There is absolutely no reason to believe that, when one repeats the enigmatic aphorisms of Vedanta, or recites the Gita, his catholicity is beyond doubt, whereas the sincerity of a Christian priest is to be suspected when he teaches the Gospel of Christ.

There are those who identify materialism with capitalism. They cannot denounce materialism as a Western product. Capitalism is not a thing of to-day. Nor did it drop from heaven or spring out of the hell. It is an economic system which evolved over a whole period of history. Although, for

many reasons, it happened to flourish more luxuriantly in Europe, its germs had been sprouting for hundreds of years in all the civilised countries. The facts, proudly cited, often exaggeratedly, by nationalist historians, regarding the growth of industry (handicraft) and expansion of trade in India, "when the fore-fathers of modern Europe were going naked", only prove that India was heading towards "materialism" even before the European peoples outgrew their primitive innocence. The growth of handicraft and the consequent expansion of trade eventually usher in capitalism. Leaving aside the controversial facts about the pre-historic and antique periods, it can be established with reliable data that commodity production on the basis of handicraft was well advanced in India even before the advent of the Europeans. So, India stood on the threshold of modern capitalism, and was walking into the corrupting embrace of materialism, when Europe was still largely merged in the darkness of the highly "spiritual" middle-ages. Two very important things are thus proved: Firstly, the love of lucre, as typified in capitalism, is not a peculiar feature of Western civilisation; and secondly, India developed this sinful love earlier than Europe.

The Indian nationalist is not ashamed of this sinful love. He only wishes to legalise, rather sanctify, it in a happy and a harmonious wedlock.

between capital and labour, thereby setting an object lesson to the materialist West. The proposition is to "spiritualise" capitalism. The least understanding of the nature of capitalism would show the absurdity of this utopia. Accumulation of wealth in the possession of the owners of the means of production by exploiting the labour power of the wage-slaves, is the essence of capitalism. That is "greed", if a moral term is to be used for describing a social impulse. The utopia of an ethical capitalism, however, is nothing new. It is an old song. It was heard in the materialist West long before Gandhi fascinated with it his uncritical followers. The most remarkable thing is that people, passing sweeping judgment against Western civilisation, are often totally ignorant of its history. Some knowledge of the social history of Europe opens one's eyes to the fact that it was the classical home of capitalism, namely, England, which gave birth also to a whole variety of utopian doctrines for the moral rehabilitation of that "unnecessary social evil."

The Christian Socialism of Charles Kingsley and his followers anticipated Gandhism by more than half a century. If William Lovett, the leader of the "moral force" wing of the Chartist movement, was here to-day, he would be found eminently qualified, in every respect, for admission into the inner conclave of the Pope of Indian nationalism, and

membership of the Working Committee of the Congress. The Christian Socialists held that disregard for "spiritual values" made the workers bitter against the employers. They set about to "spiritualise" the atmosphere, so that a perfect social harmony could be established for the benefit and happiness of all. To the workers, brutally exploited by rapacious capitalism, and bloodily suppressed by the Government whenever they revolted against intolerable conditions, Kingsley piously preached: "Be fit to be free, and God Himself will set you free.... There will be no true freedom without virtue, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God and love to your fellow-citizen." It may be pertinently pointed out that the Gospel of Christ, as falsified by Saint Mathew, was the source of inspiration of Kingsley's highly "spiritualist" view of freedom. (The original Gospel recorded by St. Luke was a powerful cry of revolt. Christianity rose as the ideology of the rebellious slaves. As such, originally it was as sublime as any religion can ever be.) Kingsley's sermon to the toiling masses, bleeding on the cross of capitalism, was of course livened up, and made more attractive by denunciation of the rich with an apostolic fervour. But that was followed by the very pragmatic proposition to throw some crumbs of justice and magnanimity to the hungry multitude before it was too late to stem the omi-



nous tide of revolt. The purpose of the Christian Socialist propaganda—of Kingsley, Maurice, Stephens and other devout reformers—was to divert the attention of the victims of capitalist greed from the sorrows and sufferings of life to illusive spiritual and moral ideals. The hero of Kingsley's novel, Anton Locke, is an ex-Chartist workman. The philosophy of deception is put into his mouth : "Fool that I was ! It was within rather than without that I should reform. For my part, I seem to have learned that the only thing to regulate the world is not more of any system, good or bad, but simply more of the spirit of God."

One of the master-builders of the British Empire, Disraeli, came under the wholesome influence of Christian Socialism. He bitterly criticised the laissez-faire policy of the whig bourgeoisie as the cause of the social misery, depicted with real artistic merit in his famous book *Sybil*, and advocated social reform—a benevolent attitude to the working class. Does the pious "anti-capitalism" of the Gandhists propose anything more spiritual ?

Another famous British statesman of the nineteenth century, Sir Robert Peel, said : "Take my word for it, it is not prudent to trust yourself to a man who does not believe in God and in a future life after death." As a matter of fact, all the leading men of the nineteenth century—the classical age of vulgar materialism running rampant—were all

highly religious, God-fearing souls. Philosophical materialism of the eighteenth century—of the French Encyclopedists—had turned out to be dangerous for the established order of society. So, the ruling class had taken refuge under the protection of God, and their pious spokesmen agitated for more benevolence, more kindness, more justice, in the relations of the established social order based on the exploitation of man by man.

“Thou shalt not make mammon thy god ; thou shalt not make gold thy god, but thy servant ; thou shalt not suffer the paradox of poverty and plenty, else thou sinnest grievously.” Who do you think pronounced those biblical words ? An Assistant Secretary of State of the United States of America under the Roosevelt regime. This Mahatmic sermon could be preached just as well by any orthodox Indian nationalist. But in practice, the cap is not placed, neither in India nor in the West, on the head it fits. The hypocritical sermon is meant for the masses, so that the preserves of the fortunate few are not in the least touched. The sanctimonious attitude towards poverty is not born of spiritualism, but of the fear of revolution. It is highly interesting to note that the object of the rulers of the most materialist country of the West happens to be identical with the Gandhist attitude towards capitalism. Gandhi also denounces capitalism, but does not advocate its abolition. His

avowed desire is to establish harmonious relations between the capitalists and workers—to persuade the former to be benevolent guardians of the latter. Addressing a public meeting at Nagpur in November 1933, the Mahatma declared: “I have been doing my very best to secure adequate wages for the labourers and to convert the capitalists to be the trustees of workers rather than their employers.” On innumerable occasions, previous to that and subsequently, he has repeated the same sentiment. In the light of such utterances the Mahatma cannot be looked upon as a greater enemy of capitalism than Disraeli. Both advocate giving the bitter pill a sugar-coating.

The Christian Socialism of Kingsley and others simply aided capitalism which it proposed to reform. Anton Locke's pious pessimism captured the depressed spirit of the workers, heavily defeated in their first great struggle for freedom. A few miserable crumbs from the overflowing table of the capitalists, accompanied by the expression of pious wishes, succeeded in making the workers accept wage-slavery as a normal condition of life. The masses were brought back under the spell of religiosity, and meekly submitted to the established codes of ethics and law. The average English worker became not only a believer in constitutional reform, but also a devoutly religious man.

In no other country is to be found a community

of civilised men and women more religious than the English proletariat. Since the doctrine of spiritualism bore them such magnificent fruits, the English capitalists also became converts to it, conveniently forgetting the rationalist and materialist traditions of their revolutionary forefathers. Sickening philistinism ran rampant in the land of Bacon, Hobbes and Locke. The Victorian era—the period of phenomenal capitalist development and colonial expansion—was intensely religious. Gladstonian liberalism sailed merrily with the fraudulent colours of harmony between capital and labour.

No reasonable person can possibly believe that the magic wand of Gandhism will spiritualise the capitalist system in any different fashion. It is not a part of the “spiritual genius” of India to abolish capitalism. The proposition is only to “moralise” it, humanise it. Materialism, in the worst sense of the term, always thrives in the *gairic* garb of spiritualism. Those who reject spiritualism, that is, religious mode of thought, have nothing but disdain for what is vulgarly called materialism. Their moral attitude is depicted in the words of Epicurus—one of the illustrious founders of philosophical materialism. He cast away the belief in gods and threw off the shackles of religion, not to “eat, drink and be merry”, but “in order to be noble and virtuous because it is a pleasure to be so”.

The vulgar doctrine of "eat, drink and be merry", maliciously attributed to the materialist sage of ancient Greece by the barbarous Christian theologians, has been adopted by the ruling classes which devoutly profess Christian virtues, and pompously talk of high ideals. Nor is vulgar materialism confined to the ruling classes of the West. It has been practised by them also in India in the past and is practised at present as well. The Epics and other classical literature are full of incontestable evidence to that effect. At present, the orthodox cotton kings of Ahmedabad, for example, do not lead a life more altruistic than the westernised Parsi mill-owners of Bombay. The Banya who washes his corpulent frame daily in the holy water of the Ganges and spends several hours in Puja-patha, beats Shylock in his game. It is just as erroneous to castigate the entire Western world for the vulgar materialism of its ruling class, as it is to declare Indian culture innately spiritual on the strength of the reactionary orthodoxy of the few having a stake in the established order of things. The multitude of people, in the West as well as in the East, are simply engrossed in the performance of biological functions. The desire to eat, drink and be merry, on the part of those, who at best can ever get just a glimpse of that kingdom of heaven, is a veritable incentive to progress—an urge to freedom, spiritual as well as mundane. Spiritualism, discouraging

this legitimate desire in them, stands in the way not only of material progress, but of the real spiritual emancipation of mankind.

The antithesis of spiritualism is *philosophical* materialism which has absolutely nothing to do with the vulgar characterisation "eat, drink and be merry." It is not the ideology of the capitalist Western civilisation. On the contrary, all the intellectual forces of the capitalist society are concentrated in fighting the hated and dreaded foe—the philosophy of revolution which heralds a civilisation higher than the capitalist. So, by denouncing materialism, the Indian nationalists do not reject the capitalist civilisation, but enter into an unholy alliance with it. They place themselves in such a position because of their erroneous notion about materialism. This does not mean that a better acquaintance with the enemy would make them love it. But in that case, they would at least be able to talk more intelligently and seriously. At the same time, there would be a differentiation in their ranks. The progressive elements, freed from the prejudice born of ignorance, might find in philosophical materialism a powerful means for the realisation of their goal. In any case, they are bound to break away from the traditions of religious orthodoxy.

To-day, in the Western countries, the bourgeoisie are carrying on desperately a losing struggle

against the revolutionary philosophy of materialism ; but their forefathers had to carry on the historic fight against the religiosity of mediæval barbarism in order to shake the moral and spiritual foundation of the pre-capitalist society. Their ideological weapon in that fight was philosophical materialism. The revolutionary weapon, forged originally by the great thinkers of antiquity, was profitably employed and greatly sharpened in course of the struggle of the rising bourgeoisie.

Materialist philosophy has to be called in to assist also at the re-birth of India. As long as the progressively minded intellectuals will remain wedded to the antiquated forms of religious thought, superficially rationalised to be all the more harmful because of its deceptiveness, they will simply stultify themselves. The boldness required for tearing down the rotten structure of Indian society, in the vicious atmosphere of which all incentive to progress is checked, can be born only out of a spirit set free by scientific knowledge.

The weakness of the Indian struggle for freedom lies in its ideology. An objectively progressive movement is saddled with a whole cargo of reactionary ideas which contradict its very being. The latent forces of the movement are being cramped by its ideology. If we want to go forward in the future, we must have the courage to break away from the past. The longer we linger with

the virtues of the past—virtues which have ceased to be virtues, having become veritable vices in course of time—the farther shall we remain from the victories of the future. The fighters for freedom who want to go forward must seek inspiration in philosophical materialism which alone can make a correct appreciation of the past culture as containing the germs for a superior culture to come. Only that much in past greatness is useful which helps to attain a greater future. The rest of the past are shackles to be shaken by those who want to be free and go ahead. Therefore, a correct understanding of philosophical materialism is an urgent necessity of the moment. It will immensely strengthen the forces of progress, and hasten the much delayed renaissance of India. On the other hand, it will enable our opponents, that is, the ideologists of reaction, slavery, degeneration and degradation, to put up their case with a modicum of philosophical knowledge, so that some intellectual pleasure might be derived from fighting them.



## CHAPTER IV

### MARX OR MANU

A DISPASSIONATE examination of the history of Indian culture and a critical appreciation of its positive outcome will require a book by itself. Here, I shall only record some evidence, gathered at random, which reveals the real nature of our "spiritual" culture. On the evidence of its contemporary protagonists and defenders, Indian culture is no less materialistic than the so called western culture. As a matter of fact, spiritualism, that is, the religious view of life, while antithetical to materialist philosophy, is, and always and everywhere has been, associated with vulgar materialism. Indian culture has always been materialistic in the vulgar sense, as distinct from the philosophical sense. It is hostile to the philosophy, not to the practice, of materialism. That is only natural. After all, Indians, even of the legendary Golden Age, also are terrestrial beings, and as such could not possibly rise above the necessities of physical existence. Therefore, it is a sheer fiction that Indian civilisation was fundamentally different from the civilisation of other peoples, approximately on the same level of social development. The nature of a civili-

sation is not determined by the points of the compass, but by the conditions of the age in which it develops. What is called a spiritual civilisation, represents a backward stage of social progress. Indian culture is distinct from modern western culture inasmuch as it clings to mediævalism.

The other day, in an article expounding the inexhaustible, all-embracing nature of Indian culture, no less an authority on the subject than the venerable Dr. Bhagwan Das gently rebuked the radical elements of the nationalist youth for the unnationalistic tendency of seeking inspiration from the dubious foreign sources, instead of drinking deep at the fountain-head of native tradition. (The word 'native' is used for the linguistic exigency of avoiding repetition ; I hope it would not offend nationalist super-sensitiveness. Besides, what is the harm in using the word ? We are natives of our country. So, why should we resent being called so ?) Dr. Bhagwan Das says that Indians are not afraid of socialism. Undoubtedly, he meant broad-minded and humanitarian Indians like himself. Unfortunately, India, like any other country, is populated mostly by ordinary mortals who, swayed by the irresistible realities of terrestrial life, cannot attain the state of philosophic calm and emotional exaltation.

So, the fact is that socialism has become a bogey in India as well as in any other country. Of course,

to the multitude, with nothing to lose but their chains, (and a chain is a chain even when it is rusty as in India), socialism offers the way to salvation in this mortal world. Therefore, in a way, it is true that India, with her pauperised masses, is not afraid of socialism, should not be, at any rate. But there are Indians and Indians. If the great majority of the Indian people have nothing to lose but their chains, the foreign rulers are not alone responsible for this national misfortune, nor are they the sole beneficiaries thereof. There are Indians with stakes in the present conditions of the country. They can not naturally share the detached and benevolent attitude of modern *rishis* like Dr. Bhagwan Das. They have also something substantial to lose. One should not expect them to face the menace of socialism with a philosophic calm, much less to be sympathetic to it. They are afraid of socialism ; and fear breeds hatred.

Though the authoritative exponent of Indian culture assured that its spiritualist traditions would enable Indian society, as a whole, to embrace socialism, the fact is that those with stakes in the present conditions of the country are afraid of socialism. They consist of a small minority of the Indian people which is responsible for, and is benefitted by, the misery, ignorance and general degradation of the masses. Their attitude towards this "product of western materialism" is that of hostility and

hatred. Let alone the direct beneficiaries, even the nationalist political leaders, so very loud in their profession of concern for the masses, frown upon the socialistic tendency spreading among the younger generation which, under the pressure of the experience of economic realities, and thanks to the blessing of modern education, is breaking away from the bondage of venerable tradition. Indeed, practically all the nationalist leaders have expressed their disapproval of, if not open hostility to, socialism.

That being the case, the statement of Dr. Bhagwan Das should be dismissed as a sweeping generalisation, utterly unfounded. Nevertheless, it is not without significance. He is holding up a fiction to obscure facts. The modern intellectual is attracted by socialism ; let him have a fraudulent variety, so that he may not fall for dangerous ideas. Let the perverse child have the toy. By socialism, Dr. Bhagwan Das means something entirely different from the abhorrent materialistic doctrine which the misguided, de-nationalised, Indian youth is learning from outlandish prophets of social justice, who must be false prophets, if what they teach is not to be found in Manu.

Dr. Bhagwan Das, together with other revivalist defenders of Indian culture, is of the opinion that the last word of social science (poli-

tics, economics, law, civics, so on and so forth) has been said by the sages of ancient India. Therefore, he deplors the fact that the youthful enthusiasts for social justice are seeking inspiration from Marx and Lenin, ignoring or neglecting the teachings of Manu. Let the Indian socialists eschew Marx, to be guided by the wisdom of Manu, and they will find a place in the all-inclusive embrace of Mother India. If Socialism conforms with the codes which provide the moral sanction to the established social system, naturally, it will not be dreaded by those who enjoy a privileged position in, and derive benefits from, the *status quo*.

That is the kind of socialism Dr. Bhagwan Das has in mind when he makes the sweeping generalisation which appears to make the incredible impression that, thanks to their spiritual culture, the Indian upper classes would readily forego their lucrative privileges. Granted that ancient India really had her Janakas, to-day she cannot boast of any bearing the remotest resemblance to those benevolent patriarchs of legendary fame. Besides, charity may be a virtue; but it is not social justice. It adds insult to injury. Alms-giving is not socialism. Some of the rich, in India as well as in other countries, are liberal givers of alms. There are those who give in charity a part of their ill-gotten wealth. On that token, there is no less

of Manu's socialism in materialist America than in spiritualist India. Rockefellers and Carnegies should be regarded as modern incarnations of Janaka; and a civilisation that could produce dozens of modern Janakas should not be accused of materialism.

Let us suppose that the inspired wisdom of Manu anticipated the teachings of Marx, and that scientific socialism is not an ideal unknown to ancient India. Why, then, this curious animus against this doctrine which, on your own claim, is not outlandish at all? Since Marx simply repeated what the Indian sage had taught, there can be no reasonable objection to the Indian youth learning the teachings of Manu second-hand, if they are not able to appreciate the original goods. They are on the right road, anyhow; and if Marxism is nothing but a feeble echo of the profound wisdom of Manu, the erring Indian youth are sure to return home in a round-about way. Why not let them have the rope, and wait for the return of the prodigal?

Evidently, there is a reason for this curious attitude. The taboo on Marx means fear of the spread of real socialism. If the ideals of social justice preached by Marx allure Indian youth away from the traditional allegiance to Manu, that is because there is nothing common between socialism and the feudal-patriarchal social codes of mediæval

India. Whatever might have been the merits of the codes of Manu, they could not possibly be socialistic. This goes without any argument. The necessity for the socialist reorganisation of society does not arise before the attainment of social conditions which make such reorganisation possible. However, one need only read Manu to find that he was not the prophet of new social order, but an apologist of the established system. And that system was not socialistic, even in the primitive sense.

Manu's laws themselves expose the nature of the social system for the preservation of which they were given. It was a system dominated by priestly patriarchs. They may have been benevolent, but were certainly not democratically minded. Their power was not even constitutionally limited. Manu's codes lay down social obligations. They don't mention popular rights, not even of the most rudimentary kind admitted in primitive tribal organisations. Undoubtedly, Manu legislated for a society much above the tribal level. The primitive communism of the pre-Vedic era had disappeared. The society at the time of Manu was based upon the patriarchal form of private property guaranteed by a theocratic State. The whole social philosophy of Manu is summarised in his definition of *dharma*, and it is the Hindu conception of *dharma* which is supposed

to be the essence of India's message to the world. *Dharma* is a religio-ethical concept of social conduct. Manu defines it as "contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating (what belongs to others), obedience to rules of purification, coercion of organs, wisdom, knowledge of the supreme soul, truthfulness and abstention from anger."

That is a formidable catalogue of virtues, all of which could be easily and profitably professed, even practised, by the privileged class of priests and patriarchs. For the rest of the society of the time, the practice of these virtues would mean voluntary submission to the established order. Look at these time-honoured gods a little more closely, and their clay-feet will be palpable even to the least critical.

Contentment? There is no point in preaching this virtue to those who have no reason to be discontented. To practise it, is no effort for the privileged. Discontent on the part of the have-nots is a natural enough sentiment, and as such morally justifiable. But it is a standing menace to the social *status quo*. A virtue, to be practised as a religious duty, was made out of contentment because it would guarantee the position of the privileged. The latter could easily set the example, having no reason to be discontented; and thus encourage those with ample reason to rebel against



their fate, in the practice of the virtue with the forlorn hope of placating the gods who dictate the destinies of man. For the privileged, the virtue is only a matter of profession, which gives the comfortable feeling of self-righteousness, an emotional gain for nothing. From the multitude, however, it demands hard practice. They must make real sacrifice to practise contentment.

Forgiveness is a virtue only when it is practised by those who have been wronged. So, the moral burden is again on the masses, who must be constantly wronged should a minority be vouchsafed power and privilege. Then, practice of the virtue by the latter is recommended as a policy. The powerful can afford to be magnanimous. That would only benefit themselves, securing the gratefulness of the forgiven, who have much more to forgive. Forgiveness is not a virtue, but sheer hypocrisy, when delinquencies forgiven are justifiable morally, because they are committed under the pressure of necessity. It is not virtue to pardon a theft committed by a hungry man.

Unless the masses were taught self-control, that is, the habit of doing without the elementary necessities of life, the surplus produce of their labour could not accumulate in the possession of the upper classes. Self-control is the religious-ethical formulation of the fundamental principle

of the economics of a society based upon non-productive ownership. In a limited sense, as a check upon action and emotion, it is denial of individual freedom, and inhibition of natural impulses. In the former case, it is a subtle but very effective method of exercising social coercion ; in the latter, it is harmful intellectually as well as emotionally. What is recommended is not self-control, but self-annihilation. Control is desirable and necessary, socially as well as ethically. But it amounts to denial of the right of the individual to human existence and normal exercise of biological functions, unless the demand for control is preceded by an express recognition of that right. Social harmony secured through the arbitrary restriction of the physical and emotional life of the masses guarantees an established order at the expense of the future. The virtue of self-control keeps the standard of living of the masses in a static condition ; indeed, it has a depressing effect. The economic development of a country primarily depends on the growth of the consuming capacity of the population. That is an elementary principle of economics. The *dharma* of self-control is dictated by conditions of pre-capitalist economy which, based on non-productive ownership (sacerdotal, patriarchal, feudal) precluded expansion of production. The total production having been necessarily limited, the grandeur of the upper

classes (described, for example, in the Mahabharata) was possible only if the producing masses could be persuaded or coerced to practise the virtue of simple life. The simpler, the better. The virtue of self-control stands for the spoliation and exploitation of the masses.

The next virtue on the catalogue is respect for the sanctity of private property. This alone exposes how fantastic is the contention that Manu was the prophet of socialism. If the socialists, acting on the advice of Dr. Bhagwan Das, spurn outlandish doctrines and turn to Manu for the ideal of social justice, they must practise the virtue of "abstention from unrighteous appropriation". Faithful to the traditions of India's spiritual culture, nationalist leaders professing sympathy for the ideal of social justice, discountenance the least disturbance of the established property relations, which mocks at the professed ideal. It is worse than utopian to discover socialist principles in a mediaeval social philosophy, which invokes religious sanction for the right of private property, while providing religio-ethical pretexts for the spoliation and expropriation of the producers of wealth.

After this, it is hardly necessary to go through the remaining virtues on the catalogue. Some of them are mere variations of those already examined. Others are metaphysical conceptions open to all

sorts of interpretations. Truthfulness, for example, has no meaning so long as the question, what is truth remains unanswered. The religious answer to this question declares a fiction to be the only reality ; makes truth out of a falsehood. Truth is correspondence with reality ; reality is objective existence ; change is the only thing that exists objectively ; what does not change, does not exist ; ergo, change or changeableness is the only truth. But religion raises the metaphysical concept of absoluteness to the pedestal of truth. Absoluteness is not objectively real. Therefore, it is a falsehood. Since reality is changeable, correspondence with it cannot be immutable. There is no absolute truth. The abstract concept of truthfulness is meaningless. What is truthful to-day, may be positively false to-morrow, and it might have been so yesterday. What appears to be true from one point of view may be false from another. The illogical doctrine of absolute truth provides a metaphysical justification for the maintenance of a given social order by all means, including violence and coercion. If truth is immutable, any change is a violation of truth. Truthfulness is loyalty to the established regime. The socialists are advised to seek inspiration from this spiritualist philosophy!

Let alone socialists ; even those advocating milder forms of social reform do not find many noble ideals and progressive principles in Manu.

The fact is that the Draco of India was the law-giver of the mediaeval form of class domination. His laws were the instrument for the preservation of the privileges of priestly patriarchy. One need not be a de-nationalised disciple of Marx to realise that India must repudiate the teachings of Manu as a condition for her much too belated Renaissance.

For example, Professor S. V. Puntambekar of the Benares Hindu University, a liberal, writes : "No doubt, Manu's code has a spiritual outlook, a moral emphasis, a social organisation, a fundamental principle, a political scheme and an educational method." Having given the devil his due, the Professor goes on : "But it will not help in modern times. It is socially a code of conquerors and of the feudal classes suited for feudal times. The principle of inequality, of classes and of special privileges and liberties, forms the background of its social structure and legal justice. The conquered, the serfs and slaves, and the non-political classes of merchants, artisans and labourers, are given no equality of status or privilege with the nobility and clergy, who are revered as warriors and guardians of society, both in secular and spiritual affairs. The idea of the sacredness of private property, of heredity and hereditary succession, and class system are its moral foundations. The notions of the divine right of monarchy and

of the aristocracy of land and religion sharing in its privileges and powers, are its political theories. None of these reflects the spirit and the philosophy of new times."

Here speaks a person of moral courage and intellectual honesty. He knows his Manu, and would not spin out fictions to gloss over facts. He appreciates the codes of Manu in their historical setting, but is not handicapped by the metaphysical dogma of absolute truth. What was good, meritorious and useful in the past, should not be raised to the status of wisdom unaffected by time. But the Professor does not stop at the above correct exposition of the codes of Manu. He goes on to point out the motives of those who cry "Back to Manu", and courageously lays bare the selfish significance of the spiritualistic social principles they expound and ideals they hold up.

"To-day, under the onslaught of new democratic and radical or revolutionary philosophies our conservatives feel driven to philosophise about their conception of social order and their outlook on social progress. Their philosophy is, of course, apologetic, and developed to justify the position of the propertied and privileged classes. But owing to the forces of the spirit of modern times, their chief representatives cannot continue to be very reactionary. They are willing to accept as just most

of the contentions of the other liberal classes, provided that they themselves are permitted to enjoy their most important social and economic privileges. They are even prepared to champion, within the limits of their personal and property security, the rights of individuals such as tenants, workers or labourers. They are, therefore, concerned more with defending themselves and their property than with maintaining any traditional principles of society or morality. Hence they advocate the absolute right of private property, specially in land, the present law of inheritance, succession and taxation, and also the principles of class system and *laissez faire*. They believe in the tried wisdom and experience of their forefathers and of old institutions and traditions. They have no faith in the devices and untried theories of rationalism and democracy adopted in reorganising society, religion and politics. They do not believe in the potency of individual reason. There is for them something mystic, something sacred, something living, something eternal in their past wisdom, institutions and culture. They do not believe in the right of disobedience or resistance to laws and institutions of the country or in a revolution in any form. They do not want a breach with the past. The positive ideal of the conservatives is a kind of idealised feudalism. They believe in an expert governing class of hereditary nobles. They

are against any democratic system based on equality or merit or competition. They like functional organisations (caste) and fixed privileges and status of a mediaeval society."

This is a terrible indictment of the spiritualist ideology that dominates our nationalist movement. No use resenting the impudence of a benighted liberal for criticising those who are "suffering and sacrificing" for the freedom of the country — to question the disinterestedness of the sea-green incorruptibles of the Congress. That would be simply peevish. The regrettable fact is that it is a well-founded criticism. Those pledged to truthfulness should not be afraid of facing the truth. The sooner this deadly truth about the much vaunted spiritualist tradition is realised, the better for the future of India. If she is to advance towards the goal of progress and prosperity of the masses, she must break away from the reactionary ideology represented by a good many of its present leaders.

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There was a debate on socialism in Delhi the other day. Several prominent Congress leaders participated. For one reason or another, they all opposed the proposition that the economic problems of India could be solved only through the adoption of a socialist programme. The General Secretary of the Congress, Kripalani, argued that India



could never accept socialism because it is associated with materialist philosophy, which is incompatible with her cultural traditions. He availed himself of the occasion to deliver what he must have believed to be an altogether deadly attack upon materialism. Being an Acharya, not an ordinary professor, he would not be content with the usual claptrap arguments. He must say something wise, original and even "scientific". He was not disappointing. He did produce an argument which, though not very wise, was certainly original—in the sense of betraying a woeful ignorance of the subject under discussion. He made the amazing assertion that materialist philosophy discouraged enquiry and therefore it was anti-scientific. The most outstanding fact in the history of human development, however, is that the spirit of enquiry has always been associated with the rejection of views antithetical to materialism. The belief in a super-natural force, which is the essence of spiritualist philosophy, sets a limit to human intelligence. Because, if it were accessible to human understanding, it could not be regarded as super-natural. Faith and enquiry are mutually exclusive. The spirit of enquiry can never be accommodated with the out-and-out religious doctrine of Providential Ordinance, nor is it compatible with mystic spiritualism. There is little to choose between the Hindu conception of *Lila* and the faith of other religions in the creation by a personal God.

Both are equally dogmatic. The doctrine of *Lila* is also based on the belief in a personal God. Irrationalism being the very essence of religion and religious philosophy, these are antagonistic to the spirit of enquiry, and consequently the rise of modern science coincided with a revolt against them.

That is a historical fact. And that rationalist revolt, reinforced by scientific development, which it quickened, culminated in the materialist philosophy. Unrestricted enquiry into the nature and cause of things is conditional upon the assumption that there is nothing inscrutable, that whatever really exists can be known. That is the fundamental principle of materialism. Presumably, by enquiry, Kripalani meant metaphysical speculation. But that is not scientific enquiry, which needs positive knowledge to equip man with the power to push the enquiry farther and farther into the secretes of existence. While turning its back upon idle metaphysical speculation—that fruitless cohabitation with the “barren virgin of the Final Cause”—materialism stimulates the enquiry into the unknowable. The vain effort to know what is believed to be unknowable is not enquiry. Materialism does not say that everything has been known ; it simply asserts the cognisability of everything that really exists. Nothing could give a greater impetus to the spirit of fruitful enquiry.

Even the enquiry into the spirit, soul, God, is not logically excluded by materialism, provided that some rational ground for assuming their existence could be indicated ; if the belief in them could have the character of a sufficiently plausible hypothesis.

That much for Kripalani's ignorance of the subject he talks about with an air of wisdom and boldness. If he were to be credited with the knowledge that one with his academic pretention should have, his regard for truth would be open to doubt. Not a very commendable qualification on the part of an advocate of spiritualism ! Granted moral integrity (regard for truth), he had better cultivate the spirit of enquiry so that he might know a little more about materialism before presuming to judge it.

Kripalani's ignorance or disregard for truth, however, is not of particular interest. There is something more interesting which I wish to record as evidence thereof that Indian culture is not so spiritualist, after all ; that it is as materialistic (not in the philosophical, but the vulgar sense) as the western civilisation so much maligned by the orthodox nationalists. Here is what one of them—one distinguished by his particular vociferousness—said in the same debate. Satyamurthi of Madras made the following declaration : that India would never accept socialism because the love of private pro-

erty is deep-rooted in her cultural traditions. That is rather stunning. We should thank Satyamurthi for telling us the truth ; and admire his courage of disregarding the wise dictum which places a limit to truthfulness. Some of the shrewd law-givers of the Golden Age advised that unpleasant truths should not be told. Satyamurthi represented the true spirit of Manu. Challenged by the teachings of Marx, the followers of Manu must take the field as apologists and defenders of everything antagonistic to socialism.

Socialism, of course, does not propose to abolish the ownership of personal belongings. Under it, private property in the means of production, distribution and exchange shall be abolished. Because, it is the instrument of the exploitation of man by man—the basis of class-ridden society which, by its very nature, must be vitiated by selfishness, greed, violence and a whole lot of other immoral practices. The opposition to socialism inspired by the love of private property, therefore, implies defence of the right of man to exploit his fellow-men. One defends what is threatened. Socialism threatens the private ownership of the means of production—land, capital, factories, machines, etc.—inasmuch as it is the instrument of the exploitation of the masses. The current belief that the peculiar structure of the Indian society precludes the development of private property to the stage where it becomes an instru-

ment of exploitation, is simply fantastic. It represents ignorance of the science of economics, and of the laws of social evolution.

Except in primitive communities, in which the means of production belong to individual producers, and economic relations remain confined to barter, private property, always and in every form, is an instrument of exploitation. Whereas in the earlier stages of capitalism the owner of the means of production still performs the function of producer, pre-capitalist forms of private property (theocratic, patriarchal, feudal) are entirely parasitic. Based on them, society remains in a more or less static condition, maintained by such Draconian religio-ethical laws as the codes of Manu. Successful operation of these laws obstructs the germination of new forces, which heralded the rise of capitalism as the liquidator of the mediæval social order.

In spite of Manu, the spiritual atmosphere of India could not be kept altogether immune from the germs of capitalism. And it was precisely thanks to those corrupting germs that India attained a comparatively high stage of civilisation already in the olden days. A prosperous trade in manufactured goods could not develop except through the intermediary of a mercantile class. Moreover, it was conditional upon production for exchange, partially if not entirely. Shipping and

trade-relations with distant lands could never thrive on the narrow foundation of the surplus of a production which was essentially for use. Since India exported manufactured goods already in the beginning of the Christian era, probably even earlier, in her Golden Age private property must have passed out of the hands of individual producers and consequently developed into the means of exploitation of the expropriated producers. Of course, capitalism was still a long way off. But capitalism is not the only form of exploitation; and certainly not the worst. Pre-capitalist forms of exploitation are unmitigated evils; and the spiritual civilisation of ancient and mediæval India was based on those entirely parasitic forms of private property.

Thus, it was not by virtue of the imaginery special genius that India deliberately shunned the path of modern capitalism. As a matter of fact, she was well advanced on that path before other peoples appeared on the scene. Having had a start, she lagged behind because of her "spiritual" culture—compulsory practice of *dharma*, which killed in the masses of her population all the initiative necessary for the stimulation of the forces of production and the consequent rise of new classes to take over the leadership of society from reactionary priesthood and a decrepit aristocracy. India failed to enter the stage of modern civilisation be-

cause she remained wedded to backward, more parasitic, economically ruinous forms of private ownership.

Development of industries at the expense of the masses is the economic programme of nationalism. The preaching of *dharma* on the authority of Manu's ghost will be very useful for the realisation of this programme of selfishness. Still under the pernicious spell of a reactionary tradition, the masses will be easily persuaded to practise self-control and sacrifice for the material aggrandisement of the fortunate few. It is not allegiance to the spiritualist past, but an ambition for a materialist future, which accounts for the hostility towards socialism on the part of orthodox nationalists who profess so much concern for the welfare of the masses. The above statement of Satyamurthi was not made casually. It is a statement of the accepted social philosophy of orthodox nationalism. Other Congress leaders have time and again expressed similar views, though not often with the same bluntness. Satyamurthi is a representative Congressman.

The overthrow of imperialism by a movement under the slogan "Back to Manu" or even "Back to the villages" may be a counter-revolution. India would be led neither back to Manu nor kept in an Arcadian simplicity. Politically, an undemocratic régime will be established. Traditions of an ancient

culture would be fully exploited for the purpose. Socially, however, the new regime would be a bad imitation of the demagogically denounced, but secretly coveted, western civilisation. It would be a bad imitation because there would be no democratic freedom and cultural progress associated with normal capitalist development. *Purna Swaraj*, under the tricolour of orthodox nationalism, may be a ruinous, extremely unstable regime of exploitation of the masses. Nationalist China presents the tragic picture of the regime that may be the fate of India also under the rule of orthodox nationalism.

This is neither a morbid fancy nor sheer extravagance. I am not concerned with the character of this or that individual leader. The object of this criticism is a body of preconceived ideas which have had a reactionary influence on the public life. Therefore, they must be discarded, however noble, virtuous, altruistic, spiritualistic they may be made out to be by the interested people. The fact that they happen to be advocated by men and women whose moral integrity and humanitarian motives may not be doubted adds to the traditional glory of these hackneyed shibboleths. Therefore, criticism must be all the more searching and thoroughly iconoclastic. Pet ideas and popular doctrines should be dissected with a scientific rigour; they should be carried to their logical consequences.



Then we shall be able to judge whether they are helpful or harmful. Ideas guide action ; so, let us clarify our ideas, because only then effective action will be possible.

There is plenty of evidence indicating that under the rule of orthodox nationalism the most reactionary type of dictatorship may be established under the cover of benevolent paternalism, which will bolster up the most parasitic forms of exploitation on the pretext of social harmony. Lately, we have heard of objections to socialism—some wise, some demagogic, others frankly capitalistic. Look closely at these objections, and you will find that they are not objections to socialism, but to democratic freedom, even of the kind established by capitalism. The Congress-Socialists have failed to expose the undemocratic nature of the opposition to their propaganda, and the latter has therefore greatly lost its force.

In India to-day, the advocates of the greatly belated social renaissance should stand on the platform of democracy. Political and social changes necessary for the establishment of democratic freedom will amount to a profound revolution. The Congress-Socialists vaguely realise the situation when they say that political freedom must precede economic emancipation. But the economic tasks of a movement cannot be so separated from its political programme. The correct attitude on the

part of the socialists will be to appear as the advocates of democratic freedom. Then they would avoid the mistake of following a tactical line which raises the demand of national independence divested of its social implications. The programme of democratic freedom combines the political and social aspects of the movement. By advocating it, the socialists will be pursuing their ideal of social revolution, but disarm their honestly mistaken opponents; on the other hand, the rest of the crowd will be exposed as anti-democratic. The result will be weakening of orthodox nationalism, which is the condition for the attainment of democratic freedom.

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Reviewing a socialist publication (*Why Socialism?* by Jaiprakash Narain), one of the leading Congress press organs wrote: "India is traditionally bourgeois. Her religion, her society, her institutions, have all been built on the corner-stone of authoritarianism and property. There is no denying that democracy in India, whenever it comes, will be more akin to the democracy of the Reich than the democracy of Great Britain." (*Hindustan Times*, Delhi, April 20, 1936). The reviewer's characterisation of Indian culture is strictly scriptural. It is borne out by Manu. Only, while well-versed in scriptures, the reviewer is rather deficient in sociology. India is not traditionally bourgeois.

Her misfortune is that she failed to throw up a mercantile and manufacturing class sufficiently differentiated from the feudal-patriarchal ownership of land, and sufficiently strong to revolt against, and overthrow the feudal order. That society is bourgeois which is based primarily upon capitalist production. India never reached that stage, certainly not in the olden days. Traditionally, Indian society is theocratic-feudal-patriarchal. However, the reviewer is quite correct in what he means to say. Presumably, to demonstrate his acquaintance with worthless modernism, he used the wrong terminology. He meant that traditionally Indian society is based upon class domination ; and the specific form of domination is clearly described by him. He must be given the credit not only of calling the spade a spade, but also for logical consistency, though most probably unconscious.

The zealous critic of the new-fangled, un-Indian doctrine admits that Indian tradition is antagonistic not only to socialism, but even to democratic freedom. The anti-democratic nature of Indian culture and tradition, of course, can be logically deduced from what they are said to stand for. Property as such is not antagonistic to political democracy. Capitalist property, for example, normally is associated with parliamentary government. Indian society, however, rests on still another pillar: authoritarianism, which is negation of democracy.

But the reviewer does not leave us to draw the logical conclusions from the picture he correctly depicts. He frankly says : What is all this nonsense about socialism? Or that confounded non-Aryan Marx? Traditionally and by virtue of our culture, India would follow the footsteps of the heroic Hitler ; she has no use for the old forgeys who preached the Rights of Man, individualism, democracy and all that tommy-rot !

It is not an obscure journalist who points out the dreadful perspective of socio-political development in independent India, if she remains faithful to her spiritualist cultural traditions. More authoritative pronouncements also open up the same perspective, though not always with such naive frankness. Several months ago, addressing the students of the Lucknow University, Govind Bhallabh Pant told that each of them should strive to be a Gandhi or a Tagore or a Mussolini or a Hitler or a Ford. Some of the students may have been bewildered by the mixed company recommended and by the promiscuity of the ideal held up before them. Pant's promiscuous idealism should not be dismissed as an individual aberration. Fascist tendency is inherent in orthodox nationalism. Authoritarianism, mediævalism, demagoguery, spiritualist cant, vulgar materialism—these traits are all common to both. Indeed, Fascism (which in Germany takes the deceptive label of National-

Socialism) is nationalism which finds its ideals not in future progress, but in past traditions. Our orthodox nationalists also have their eyes fixed on the past. There is thus a spiritual affinity which often manifests itself. More than one nationalist leader has returned from Hitler's Germany full of enthusiastic admiration, and also from Italy. Mussolini's civilising mission in Abyssinia should have influenced the Indian attitude towards fascist Italy. Yet, there are Congress leaders who disapproved of the nationalist movement declaring solidarity with the victim of fascist aggression. Kripalani, for instance, went to the extent of guardedly justifying Italy's action, and openly maintained, as against the demand of the socialists, that it was no business of Indian nationalists to take sides in the conflict !

Shortly before Mussolini launched on his African venture, he delivered an oration on the spiritual values of oriental culture to a gathering of Indian students. Some "radical" nationalist leaders (Subhas Bose, for example) were present at that memorable scene and spoke about the spiritual affinity between Fascism and the struggle of the subject peoples for freedom. The fate of Abyssinia must have given them a rude shock. But did it? That still remains to be seen. In the meanwhile, Subhas Bose has entertained us by the picture of a "synthesis of nationalism and communism" which,

according to him, will result from the victory of the Indian struggle for freedom ! Germany has had her National-Socialism ; and there is not one single lover of freedom, peace and progress, who does not bitterly bemoan her fate. India might have a similar experience, only under the slightly different flag of National-Communism, if she did not look out before it was too late.

Reverting to Pant's promiscuity of ideals, Gandhi and Tagore, each in his own way, embody what is called the special genius of Indian culture. Both are ardent opponents of western materialism, would not only prevent India, if they could, to fall under the degenerating influence of modernism, but also bring to the tormented world the panacea of India's message. The doctors, however, do not agree. The panacea has been differently prescribed. For the one, it is a denunciation of modern industrialism and also of nationalist exclusiveness ; for the other, it is non-violence. Gandhi is also hostile to modern industrialism, but politics has brought him in contact with sobering influences. On the other hand, the ideals which Indian youth might alternatively follow, curiously enough, happen to be personifications of the crassest forms of the evil of western civilisation that are to be cured by the medicines prescribed by Gandhi and Tagore.

Ford has perfected the industrial technique of

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the capitalist mode of production to the point where man becomes completely enslaved to the machine, a mere part of it. His "humanitarianism"—the much advertised policy of paying high wages—is determined by the old utilitarian wisdom which prohibits the killing of the goose that lays the golden eggs. The legend of Ford's fatherliness is no longer believed except by those who have no understanding of modern industrial technique, and are utterly indifferent to the human value of labour. The fact is that Ford's system is such an extreme form of exploitation of human labour as has no regard even for the elementary principle of capitalist economics which lays down that wages should represent the money value of the most minimum necessities for the subsistence and reproduction of the labourer. The productivity of a unit of labour performed under the Ford system is much greater than in less exacting industrial processes. So, in reality, the higher wages paid by Ford are lower than the average scale of wages elsewhere. The essence of Ford's system is to make a man produce more in a given unit of time and pay him for only a fraction of his speeded up productivity. But even this fake paternalism has broken down. Higher wages are a thing of the past while the other aspects of paternalism are stubbornly defended. With the threat of summary dismissal Ford combats the effort of his employees to organise

themselves in trade-unions. He would not accept the principle of collective bargaining, because that would limit his arbitrary power on the slaves tied to the monstrous machines which he owns, not as means of production but as merciless instruments of exploitation. That is one of the ideals placed on par with the spiritualist ideals born of Indian culture !

The others are still worse. Mussolini and Hitler are personifications of the most violent forms of capitalist exploitation. They are avowed enemies of all the cultural values of modern civilisation. They not only practise, but brazenly glorify violence. They are veritable gods of war. They are the rabidest apostles of predatory nationalism, which logically leads to brutal aggression upon the weak. In short, they stand for everything that is opposed to India's message as delivered by Gandhi and Tagore. Yet, the ideology of our orthodox nationalism idealises them.

An alternative explanation of the apparently incongruous mixture of ideals is that the preacher is totally devoid of any moral conviction or social principles. He does not believe in whatever he may profess. That means that the political standard-bearers of orthodox nationalism pay only lip loyalty to the spiritualist traditions for demagogic purposes—to keep the masses under the spell of authoritarian and fatalistic tradition, so that they may



not grudge against the shining chains of national freedom, when these have replaced the rusty fetters of colonial slavery.

In any case, it is clear that either the ideals of orthodox nationalism are false ideals, or the political leaders sailing under that misleading banner are dishonest and therefore not trustworthy. The incipient forces of Indian Renaissance are thus beset with a double danger. Ideologically, they are pursuing a dangerous fiction ; politically they are at the mercy of misleaders who are fools if not knaves. And the two dangers are inter-connected. The one results from the other. Get rid of the false ideology, and you will see through your heroes. With a clear social orientation, the fighters for national freedom will be able to throw up a courageous, different and honest leadership which is the crying need of the moment.

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The orthodox nationalist leaders carefully avoid giving any idea as regards the political constitution and social structure the country will have under Swaraj. That is a very curious attitude for the leaders of a political movement to take. But the nature of the political regime to be established under the leadership of a party logically results from its social outlook. The paternalistic social outlook of the Congress leaders implies a negation of democratic freedom. A picture of the political

constitution which can have the sanction of the spiritualist tradition of Indian nationalism was presented the other day by one of the modern religious leaders of India while delivering the Convocation Address at the Agra University. He said : "The wrong spirit of democracy is the cause of the prevailing discontent and confusion. The existing cause of conflict in politics, in economics and in the soul of man will not be lifted from any society till, through higher education, it will be able to produce leaders, thinkers, statesmen and legislators who will recognise the natural inequality of men in intellect and will, and understand the benefit of giving preference to the good of the society over personal interests, and appreciate the subtle difference between happiness and pleasure." The speaker was Sahebji Maharaj of Dayalbagh.

So, the orthodox nationalist Swaraj will not, after all, be restoration of the Ramraj. It will be a modernised Brahmin Raj, an intellectual aristocracy wielding absolute power which is their monopoly, because the multitude is by nature deprived of that qualification. That is the corollary of the doctrine of "natural inequality". The excellence of Hindu philosophy is said to consist in a principle which is diametrically opposed to this doctrine. It is said that the self-same divine light burns in all, making everybody potentially equal ; and the equality is realisable. Now we are told that spiritual

equality does not imply even potential equality on this earth. Some are made, by God presumably, superior to others and are therefore destined to rule by divine right, so to say.

That is not the view of a stray individual. It is a "spiritual truth". The doctrine of inequality is preached by Lord Krishna himself in the Gita, which is the gospel of orthodox nationalism. Evidently on that authority, the famous "scheme of Swaraj" prepared by the late C. R. Das with the co-operation of the modern Rishi Dr. Bhagwan Das, vests supreme administrative and legislative authority in an intellectual elite particularly qualified for the job.

A year later, the same doctrine was preached to the students of another University by an authority on the Hindu scriptures. "Equality and freedom, about which there has been a lot of ill-digested talk among the Indian youth, should not degenerate into social anarchy. Any attempt to write on a clean slate and to demolish the past completely, and to build anew, is against the nature of India's genius and will prove a dismal failure. The problems of the world will be solved by educated men inspired by the ideal of disinterestedness and disciplined skill suggested in the teaching of the Gita." (Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswami Sastri, Madras University Convocation, 1936).

Of course, I do not maintain that men are born

equal, or that at any conceivable time in the future the entire mankind will be levelled up intellectually. But on the other hand, biological sciences show that, except for the diseased, every human being, given favourable conditions, is capable of developing unlimited powers of intellect and will. The unfolding of the inherent possibilities of development is held in abeyance so long as the blessing of higher education is kept reserved for the privileged few. All we need do is to change the conditions of life so that a growingly large number of people will have plenty of leisure, with the requisite facilities for intellectual development, and there will be any number of men fit to be leaders, thinkers, statesmen and intellectuals. The process of unfolding potential possibilities could not be general immediately, and the present demarcation between the intellectual elite and the dumb-driven mob will begin to lose its sharpness only when several generations have grown up in the midst of changed conditions. As a matter of fact, in the more advanced countries of Europe, thanks to the spread of education and the consequent general cultural progress, brought about by the curse of democratic freedom, the demarcation has almost disappeared. There leaders, thinkers, statesmen, legislators hail from all walks of life, and nobody can assert that those rising from the lower classes are in any way inferior to the scions of the social elite. Natu-

rally, the former do not recognise any natural inequality of men, they themselves being the refutation of the damnable doctrine. The prevailing discontent and confusion are not the result of the spirit of democracy, but of checks placed upon its free development.

But the spiritualist philosophy of India recommends a return to the rule of intellectual aristocracy which, until now, has always entered into an alliance with the secular aristocracy. Such an alliance thrived not only on the sacred soil of India. The Holy Roman Empire, which ruled Europe for one thousand years, was such an alliance, the clergy (intellectual as well as spiritual aristocracy) having had the upper hand most of the time. Similarly, in ancient India, the Brahmins ruled in conjunction with the Kshattriyas occupying a higher place in the social hierarchy. That mediæval political system guaranteed in India as well as in Europe a social order based upon such a purely parasitic form of private property and such a ruinous mode of exploitation of the labouring masses, as rendered any spread of culture impossible. Given not the least opportunity for unfolding their human potentialities, the multitude was branded with natural inequality. Yet, they were all either *Naranarayanas* or the children of God. Such is the hypocrisy of religious thought palmed off as the spiritual panacea for all the evils of a world which has

travelled far away from the reactionary rule of the sacerdotal aristocracy. It is true that there is one thing which the intellectual elite, as the ideologists of the feudal aristocracy, alone can do—"to appreciate the subtle difference between happiness and pleasure"; and teach the masses to prefer the former to the latter. There we have the function of spiritualism in a nutshell. One of the intellectual elite, which claims the right to rule by divine right even in the middle of the twentieth century, makes the difference quite clear lest his hearers might fail to grasp the subtlety. We read the following in Sahebji Maharaj's Convocation Address at the Agra University: "You never can make life happy with mere abstract intelligibility—the ideal of science. You must control the lower appetite of man and satisfy his higher cravings with the help of religion." The speaker might be a particularly fanatical defender of reactionary ideas; but the more significant fact is that these ideas could be preached in a modern University and thousands of educated young men listened to them without a single voice of protest.

The possession of intellectual superiority is proclaimed to be the qualification for political power and social leadership. Yet the hankering for that quality is discouraged! If too many aspired for it, the monopoly of the privileged few would

be threatened. The cross of responsibility should be borne only by the chosen few.

“Abstract intelligibility”, that is, scientific knowledge, is deprecated because it disturbs the religious spirit of resignation to the inscrutable Will of God, who has made men naturally unequal, some endowed with the quality to rule, others destined to perform dutifully lowly functions allotted to them. Don't try to know too much. That will only make you doubtful about the traditional values of life. Whoever eat of the fruit of knowledge are sure to be driven out of the paradise of faith. Ignorance is bliss. Since blissfulness is the ideal of human life, knowledge must be placed at a discount, if not altogether under taboo. But one may ask, if scientific learning is to be avoided, what then is higher education ? We are told that it is cultivation of the religious spirit, which subordinates knowledge to faith. If faith in Divine Providence is the standard of education, it logically follows that the purer the faith, the higher the education, and the Indian masses are possessed of the highest education by this standard. Where, then, is the natural superiority of the intellectual elite ? There is one qualification which distinguishes the elite from the multitude of believers. It is the ability to rationalise faith ; in other words, to justify immoral social relations which are guaranteed by blind faith on the part of the masses. That

distinction entitles them to the privilege of ruling so long as society remains an immoral order claiming the sanction of metaphysical principles of morality.

The higher education of the ruling elite, thus, is the skill to deceive the people in the name of God. The duty of those aspiring for political power and social leadership is to give stones to the hungry crowd when they ask for bread, and call the stone *shalgram sheela* or the *Shiva lignam*. The function of religion is to teach the masses to do with the most minimum of earthly goods, so that the great bulk of the fruits of their labour remain the share of the privileged few. These are entitled to "pleasure" derived from the enjoyment of wordly goods. But the masses should be taught to prefer "happiness" which flows from the ability to toil and starve with resignation. The rule of an intellectual aristocracy is better than democratic government, because the former is qualified to teach the masses that one gets more happiness from starving than from eating.

We are further sermonised: "Your modern education can make people clever, but not happy. Your modern democratic rights can make people powerful, but not self-controlled. The more you accumulate earthly good, the greater becomes the desire for them, and you are never satisfied. It is evident that everybody in this world cannot possess



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motor cars and horses ; nor can everybody be a multi-millionaire."

Since the doctrine of happiness without pleasure can go down only in an atmosphere of ignorance, and the consequent intellectual servility, modern education is to be shunned like a plague. It makes people "clever". What a crime ! In a society given to the disparaged scientific ideal of intelligibility and with the perverse tendency to encourage cleverness, there is no room for an intellectual elite claiming authority as a matter of divine right. When an increasing number of common people begin to shake off the bliss of ignorance, and acquire the ability to look at things intelligently, and examine venerable ideas critically, the spiritual value of happiness derived from abject resignation becomes open to doubt. Clever people are naturally not happy to starve, or go without other elementary human necessities. The society ruled by an intellectual aristocracy with the enslaving and dehumanising dogma of spiritualism must be composed of dumb-driven cattle. Modern education foments rebelliousness. It disturbs the spirit of resignation which is the fountain of happiness without pleasure.

The possession of earthly goods like motor cars and horses is not condemned ; nor is it a sin to be a multi-millionaire. It is damnable materialism only when those who manufacture motor cars

want to ride in them, those who build houses want to have a decent place to live in. That is "lower appetite". The common man's stomach cannot digest rich food which must be reserved for those few who are accustomed to luxury. That is providential dispensation.

Then, how is it evident that everybody cannot possess a motor car? And a house, together with all the other amenities of life which today are reserved for the privileged few? Of course, there cannot be a whole population of parasites. But there is absolutely no obstacle in the way to providing every member of a community with all the ease and comfort of a civilised existence. Modern democratic rights equip the masses with weapons necessary for conducting a struggle for the establishment of such civilised conditions of life. So, they must be deprecated. Should the Indian masses ever get hold of that weapon, they would sooner or later be powerful and shake off the fetters of self-control imposed upon them by religion—that charter of slavery bearing the seal of God. They practise the virtue of simple life because they are forced to. Let them have the power to conquer a fuller, better, happier life on this earth, and they will not be slow to assert themselves. But that will necessarily mean encroachment upon the traditional preserve of the privileged. Therefore, democratic freedom has no place in the spiritualist

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politics of Indian tradition ; democratic rights are condemned as evils which corrupt the virtue of self-abnegation.

A reactionary philosophy, loyalty to antiquated, parasitic, ruinous social institutions, and the resulting anti-democratic spirit drive the orthodox nationalist leaders to a position where they must rub shoulders with all sorts of queer company. Let me illustrate : "We are prepared to make joint efforts with any political party for the formulation of a practical programme on lines which have proved successful in countries other than Russia, and without causing disturbance to the existing order of things. No one can deny that the contentment and happiness of the masses should be our main objective. But this will never be accomplished by up-rooting centuries' old institutions, and going counter to India's culture and tradition." Now who do you think uttered these noble sentiments ? The credit could be given to any member of the Congress Working Committee, perhaps except the President\* and the three Socialists who are entirely out of place and do not count in the determination of high politics. These words, which might have fallen from the lips of any other apostle of *Purna Swaraj*, were uttered by Sir Cowasjee Jehangir as the President of the conference of the Bombay Liberal Federation.

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\* Jawaharlal Nehru

The Bombay Baronet, in spite of being the embodiment of "western materialism" (read capitalist exploitation) which is polluting the sacred soil of India, is able to appreciate the spiritual value of happiness as against pleasure. He also is a defender of centuries' old institutions and India's cultural traditions, although personally he does not believe in any one of those antique gods. But he encourages their worship because that is helpful for keeping the masses in contentment and happiness. Starvation wages and the chawls of Bombay represent the order of things that should not be disturbed. Barring that, the Baronet is ready to profess the high ideal of humanitarianism as loudly as anybody.

The bogey of Socialism and Communism is raised with the object of combatting the growing consciousness of the urgent necessity for a radical change of the established order, not only political but also economic. Historically, this required change is brought about by the democratic revolution. Therefore, Indian nationalist hostility to Socialism is in reality opposition to democratic freedom. When you oppose revolutionary changes, you do not fight an abstract idea ; you place yourself against the specific changes that are on the order of the day.

The crusade against an imaginary attack upon the sacred institutions of traditional significance is

justified with the pseudo-democratic proclamation that the questions about the constitution of the National State and the re-construction of society could not be raised now ; they will be settled by the people when free. No political party which knows its business can ever be so open-minded. If sincere, it is a deplorable empty-headedness, not open-mindedness. The people cannot be led to a void. There must be a goal ; and they must know where they are going. The posing and discussion of fundamental questions about the objective of a movement are deferred when it lacks the unity of purpose ; when the ideology and social outlook of the leadership run counter to the sub-conscious or semi-conscious strivings of the people. In such a situation, rank hypocrisy becomes the guiding principle of propaganda, and agitation degenerates into sheer demagoguery. The people are deceived by their leaders, some of whom may be deceiving themselves. The masses are told that the Congress is determined to help them. At the same time, no orthodox Congressman should explain how the condition of the masses will be improved. Place your faith in miracles, and meanwhile raise the hopes of the masses. Talk of social reconstruction frightens vested interests and impairs unity, so very essential for attaining Swaraj, which however should remain mystified, to turn out a myth in the fulness of time. But it is not difficult to see

through the veil of mystification. If not to frighten away vested interests is a condition for the attainment of Swaraj, the goal obviously is mortgaged heavily in advance to those interests, whose adhesion to the cause is so solicitously canvassed.

While thus insisting that the Congress should not be committed to any definite programme of social reconstruction, the orthodox leaders, nevertheless, do not make any secret of the fact that they have very definite ideas about the socio-political future of the country. Only the other day, Vallabhbhai Patel thundered that the Congress had no use for Socialism, Communism or any other ism. It is incredible that such an idiotic assertion would be made by one hailed as a great leader. If the assertion means anything, it means that the Congress has no principle. But that is not true. The Congress has a very rigidly formulated "creed". What Patel means, then, is that, so long as leaders like himself remain in control, the Congress will not accept any revolutionary principle elaborated in a programme of social reconstruction.

What are those other isms which are to be rejected, so that the Congress may remain true to Gandhism? That is also an ism. And the present leaders of the Congress cannot disown it. Is it not significant that, while opposing the socialist programme, they have failed to advocate a

clearly defined programme of bourgeois democratic revolution ? If both are ruled out, one explicitly and the other implicitly, what remains ? It can be logically inferred that under Swaraj India will have a political constitution more backward than parliamentary democracy ; socially, she will retain property relations the abolition of which by a democratic revolution is necessary for the modernisation of her economy and the conquest of progress and prosperity of the nation. Swaraj will be a Dead Sea fruit—a superficial political change which will leave intact the economic structure of society as a whole, which is fundamentally responsible for the poverty, misery, ignorance, and degradation of the masses. The perspective is still more ominous. There is a likelihood of the coveted Swaraj being transformed into a fascist dictatorship. Under the *gairic* banner of orthodox nationalism, Swaraj is more likely to be Hitler Raj than Ram Raj, which, being a legend, can never be realised, anyhow.

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There still remains the familiar but fallacious question—why should India follow the path of European socio-political development ? The question might have some pertinence if any nationalist theoretician could indicate a possible alternative line of evolution, instead of, as they usually do, expatiating on the legendary glory of

the past. Involution is not an alternative to evolution. Reaction and progress are not identical. The question is backed up by the utterly groundless assertion that India's mystic special genius will enable her to strike out a novel way of socio-political development, which will defy all the empirically established laws of history. Since the spiritualist view of life is claimed to be the special genius of India, with that superiority she is doomed to vegetate in the foul backwaters of antiquated mediævalism. This dogma of special genius has deprived Indian nationalism of the benefit of clear thinking. Let this ghost be laid on the strength of an unchallengeable evidence.

Sir Radhakrishnan is the recognised authority on Indian philosophy. He is a panegyrist, not a critic. Speaking in Madras (April 1936), he admitted that "we might not be able to contribute very much to the economic and political thought of the world. India's great contribution is religion and philosophy. But let us not imagine that we have a monopoly in that. I have always felt that in the history of the world, there has been no real contrast between the East and the West. It is only in recent times that there has been a cleavage between the Enlightenment, Humanism and Rationalism of the West and Spiritualism of the East. Rationality, enlightenment and human rights—those are the key-notes of modern western



civilisation." *Mutatis mutandis*, their rejection is the essence of what is called the special genius of India. Only, there is no speciality. Western civilisation was also spiritualistic in the past. Sir Radhakrishnan himself said later on that the existence of a "mysterious something is not recognised in recent times by the West, while it was recognised in the Middle-Ages."

That is a statement of historical fact. And what does it mean? It means that spiritualism is the philosophy of a mediæval society. So, the special genius of India may keep her away from the temptation of the ways of Western development—the ways of rationalism, enlightenment, human rights—but it cannot show her an alternative way out of the morass of mediævalism. Therefore, to ask—why should India follow the European line of socio-political development?—is to ask why she should come out of the darkness of mediævalism, why should the Indian people be deprived of the bliss of ignorance? Why, indeed! The question implies that India is quite content to be without rationality, enlightenment and human rights.

Those who want to conquer the future must turn their back on the past, break away from the paralysing grip of traditional notions. The essence of our ancient culture is religion. Spiritualism is blind faith in an inscrutable power which must be

obeyed. It is a teleological view of life and the world. Everything is providentially preordained. Everything happens in fulfilment of a divine purpose. Thus, religious spirit—the essence of Indian culture—is naturally antagonistic to any change to be brought about by human effort. Fatalism in the garb of religiosity has been fatal to India. The programme of reforming religion is unrealisable. The power of religion lies in the claim to immutability. Hinduism particularly does not admit of any reform. It is *Sanatan Dharma*—eternal, unchangeable, infallible. Reformers deceive themselves as well as their followers. Hinduism itself cannot be reformed, and it is against all social change. Orthodox religionists tell us the hidden truth behind the lies of spiritualist rationalism.

The Sanatanist conference of Gujarat (August 1936) declared that “Socialism is definitely against Hindu scriptures and Sanatan Dharma, and that its spread must be checked by all possible means.” The President of the conference delivered himself of the following sentiments: “The king is the most important factor in preserving the peace of a country. The capitalist system is most suited to India, and all attempts to overthrow it should be opposed.” For Socialism, read any change in the established social order. Because, monarchist sentiment is antagonistic to the introduction of a democratic regime, although it accomodates capitalism,

which, as in India, does not rise as a socially revolutionary force.

The mill-owners of Ahmedabad and the cotton kings of Gujarat are mostly Sanatanists, ostentatiously religious at any rate. Who is more demonstratively devotional than the Marwari merchants? The above declaration cannot be dismissed as that of some obscure Sanatanist. It is almost a verbatim repetition of pronouncements of Congress leaders already referred to. As a matter of fact, the Congress leaders only echo the Sanatanist spirit, which is the essence of Indian culture idealised by them. They simply try to gloss over the crass superstitious aspects of that spirit, so that it might be reconciled with a superficial modern education. But in relation to the social implication of the religious spirit, they do not differentiate themselves from the outspoken Sanatanists.

There are other critical students of India's past who also plead passionately for a break with the traditional notions, although they do not share the views of a conscious revolutionary. Nobody would accuse Sir Hari Singh Gour of any socialistic inclination. On the other hand, it would be sheer impudence to deny him the credit of patriotism. Moreover, his learning is unquestionable. He is an authority of Hindu law. So, his opinion deserves careful consideration.

"We can no longer feed upon the dry crumbs

of old tradition. We should no longer accept the old because it is old, but stretch it out on the dissecting table of reason. There should be no tender regard for ancient authority which has painted all our history so red with our own blood. What India wants is a Renaissance, which must accompany a revolt against traditional belief and traditional credulity. What India needs is an intellectual iconoclasm which will destroy the still more sinister idols of our superstition. Our forefathers lived primitive lives. Their wants were simple, their struggles hard, their environments limited. That life may create a yearning for its return, but we cannot return to the simple lives of our forefathers when we are born in the rattle of machinery and its finished outpourings, before which man-made products are crude and uneconomic. Some feeble and wholly inadequate efforts are being made to improve the lot of the depressed classes ; but nothing short of absolute inequality is possible so long as Hinduism remains tied to the shackles of caste. Some self-complacent Indians reconcile themselves to their reactionary march on the ground that we have always been a people who have scorned the materialism of the West. Our strength, they say, lies in our spirituality. But are we sure that this is not an empty phrase ? What has India contributed to the spiritual uplift of ourselves or of the world ? We have expelled Buddhism,

the supreme spiritual force generated in our midst. We deny the materialism of the West, and associate it with the filth and squalour of factory life... Let us face the facts as we find them. The so-called materialism of the West has added to human happiness and alleviated human suffering, which will astound those if they only took stock of the ranges of disease which used to decimate the populations of eastern countries before the healing balm of western science started its humane mission of saving the people against themselves." (*Hindusthan Review*, February 1936).

These few lines, carrying the authority of a thorough study of the subject, are worth more than all the Gandhist clap-trap which fatally fascinates even the more progressive elements in the nationalist movement. India will not be able to shake off her political servitude and economic misery, her social backwardness, her intellectual coma, so long as the educated youth remains drugged by the spiritualist message of a Vivekananda, Dayanand or an Aurobinda, or of any other prophet who may preach some such doctrine. The spirit of Renaissance is the urgent intellectual need of the time. It is abroad, but too feeble to influence the situation as yet. It must be fostered. Those engaged in that task will not win cheap popularity, but their efforts will contribute much more to the cause of Indian

freedom than the dramatics of political demonstrations.

Finally, I shall cite the most damaging judgment against our so fondly cherished spiritual tradition : most damaging, because it is pronounced by a judge biassed in favour of the condemned. In his farewell address to the students of the Andhra University, Sir Radhakrishnan said : " Many of the fundamental evils of Indian society can be traced to two important factors, namely, irresponsible wealth and religious bigotry. While economic injustices are not peculiar to our country alone, religious bigotry, which treats millions of our countrymen in a shameless and inhuman way, and imposes senseless disabilities and inconveniences on the womanhood of the country, is a standing danger. It is corruption of the spirit in the guise of superstition. Those who impose those disabilities on other human beings, are themselves victims of ignorance and superstition. There is such a thing as degeneration of accepted ideas. Many of them are kept going artificially even after life has left them. We must liberate ourselves from the tyranny of the dark past, from the oppression of spectres and ghosts, from falsehood and deceits. There are millions to-day whose life has been rendered meaningless by social maladjustments which are sanctified by religion, and they may be pardoned if they dismiss religion as a luxury which they cannot

afford." The speaker concluded by a passionate appeal "to resist economic and religious tyranny". He exclaimed: "It is the duty of every patriotic person to resist. In our country, we have to resist despotism on every side."

This cannot be dismissed as the ravings of a destructive revolutionary, as loose talk of a socialist propagandist. It is the verdict of a sober thinker. When a confirmed protagonist of the spiritualist philosophy is driven by his human sentiment to such a righteous indignation against the practical products of his own philosophy, it can no longer be doubted that there is something radically wrong with it. A few days later, in a speech in Madras, Sir Radhakrishnan once again vehemently condemned "the seamy sides of Hindu society". The evils condemned by him are bred in the foul atmosphere of social stagnation. They can be eradicated only through a profound social and ideological revolution. Traditional notions must be discarded, venerable dogmas must be subjected to severe criticism, time-honoured institutions must be mercilessly pulled down. The reactionary ideology of orthodox nationalism must be replaced by a revolutionary philosophy. All the advocates of democratic freedom, cultural progress, general welfare, all true reformers, all sincere humanitarians, all opponents of violence and lovers of peace, all who want to transform the fiction of social harmony into a

reality, all who would conquer the future instead of living in a legendary past, should travel that way. Materialist philosophy—knowledge instead of faith, reason instead of authority, the physical instead of the metaphysical, the natural instead of the super-natural, facts instead of fiction—this can lead not only to political freedom, economic prosperity and social happiness ; it indicates the only way to real spiritual freedom.



## CHAPTER V.

### INDIA'S MESSAGE

THE "decline of the West" being in reality only the decline of capitalism, the crisis of western civilisation means only disintegration of the bourgeois social order. In that context, India's "spiritual mission" appears to be a mission with a mundane purpose, namely, to salvage a social system based upon the love of lucre and lust for power. It is not suggested that the believers in India's spiritual mission are all conscious of its reactionary implication. Probably very few of them are. Most of them may be credited with a sincere antipathy for capitalism. But antipathy does not necessarily give birth to a desire to go farther than capitalism. It indicates an attachment to pre-capitalist social conditions, which are idealised. Objectively, it is therefore the token of a reactionary social outlook. Indian spiritualism is not different from the western kind. The merit of a philosophy is to be judged by its historical role and social significance. The sincerity or otherwise of its protagonists is altogether beside the point.

The preachers of India's "world mission" nevertheless take their stand on the dogmatic assertion

that Indian philosophy is different from western idealism. The basic principles of idealist philosophy, together with the survey of its mediæval and pre-Christian background, prove that this assertion is utterly groundless. While the emotional aspect of Indian speculation is well matched, if not surpassed, by Christian mysticism, intellectually it can hardly claim superiority to western idealism, either modern or ancient. As regards transcendental fantasies, the western mind has been no less fertile. The great Sage of Athens, the Seers of Alexandria, the Saints of early Christianity, the monks of the Middle-Ages—that is a record which can proudly meet any competition. On the question of moral doctrines, Christianity stands unbeaten on the solid ground of the Jewish, Socratic and Stoic traditions. Should the modern West be accused of not having lived up to those noble principles, could India conscientiously be absolved of a similar charge? The claim that the Indian people as a whole is morally less corrupt, emotionally purer, idealistically less worldly, in short, spiritually more elevated, than the bulk of the western society, is based upon a wanton disregard for reality.

First, let us examine the argument advanced to maintain the spiritual superiority of Indian philosophy. Then we shall proceed to analyse its social significance. And its social significance will reveal

its historical background. Thus, it will be possible to make a correct appreciation of Indian culture, and ascertain if it can be a better alternative to the modern western culture, granted hypothetically that a retrograde movement is possible in the history of human progress.

The origin of the claim that Indian philosophy is different from western idealism can be traced to the doctrine of revelation, although modern advocates of the claim fight shy of standing boldly by the very crux of their case. For, that would oblige them to forego all scientific pretensions, and come out frankly as defenders of a full-blooded faith. Only this way can Indian philosophy be proved to be different from western idealism. In that case, the finger will be laid on a real, not an imaginary, point of difference. The point is that orthodox Indian philosophy is essentially a system of mystic theology. The difference between Indian philosophy and modern idealism is identical with the difference between this latter and neo-Platonic mysticism. But to reduce the difference to the reality of historical sequence would be to blow up the myth of the Indian spiritual message ; because, then the message could no longer claim originality—the product of a special genius. Therefore, the kernel of historical reality is carefully hidden in a florid verbiage which seeks to make up for the defi-

ciency of argument in support of the claim to an imaginary difference.

It is maintained that western idealism is a mere intellectual system of speculation, whereas Indian philosophy is based upon pure experience. This contention must face the question : what is experience ? It should be noted that western idealism, as distinguished from metaphysical speculations, also starts from experience. It holds that experience is the only source of knowledge. But the "experience" of Indian philosophy apparently is not an act of cognition ; it is not derived through a mental process. For, in that case, it could not be an extra-intellectual or supra-intellectual achievement. Thus, the real difference is not, as it is stated ; it is in the concept of experience.

Experience presupposes a dual existence—a subject and an object. It results when the ego comes in contact with the non-ego. This contact, in its turn, takes place through senses. The only possible way of making an experience is through the organs of sensation, which make the ego conscious of the thing to be experienced. Experience, therefore, is the result of sensation ; and the sum total of the process of sensation is mind or intelligence. Experience, therefore, is derived through an intellectual process. It is not an extra-intellectual or supra-intellectual act.

Obviously, the experience of Indian philosophy

is something different. It is not the way to acquire knowledge of things existing objectively outside the ego, and coming in contact with the ego through processes of sensation. It is what is called "direct experience" by the frankly metaphysical schools of modern western philosophy. It is experience made *directly*, that is to say, not through the intermediary of sense organs, not through the usual process of cognition. Consequently, this experience does not represent the knowledge of something existing objectively outside the ego. It is a sort of self-illumination of the ego. It is revelation, if you do not mind calling the spade a spade. And revelation has absolutely nothing in common with the concept of experience. Experience is conditional upon the ego getting in touch with the non-ego through the medium of sense organs. Eternal truth, absolute knowledge, on the contrary, is revealed to the ego only when it has completely detached itself from the non-ego.

Indian philosophy, as philosophy, cannot be distinguished from western idealism. If it is really based upon experience, it must deal with sensible objects. It must admit the process of sensation as identical with experience—as the only way to knowledge ; it must be an intellectual system, a system of positive thought. But as a matter of fact, Indian philosophy is not based upon experience. It places knowledge beyond the reach of the physical pro-

cess of cognition. It discovers truth on the super-sensual plane. Thus, Indian philosophy claims distinction from western idealism by leaving the ground of philosophy. It claims to possess the knowledge of the super-natural, whereas western idealism limits itself to the science of nature. That is the difference between the two, and it is a real difference, being the difference between a system of mystical metaphysics and philosophy. Orthodox Indian philosophy is essentially a system of religious speculation, whereas the classical idealism of the West originated in a challenge of reason to faith.

The doctrine of direct experience is but another name for faith, only faith transferred from the God to the divinely inspired. An experience which is made on the super-sensual plane, in the state of ecstasy, in *samadhi*, is not verifiable. An unverifiable truth must either be dismissed as a fiction or be taken for granted. There is absolutely no possibility of ascertaining whether the seer actually saw what he claims to have seen. He must be taken on his word. The criterion of truth, thus, is not experience but the testimony of one who is as likely to be a saint as a charlatan or a demented soul. Honest fantasy of the morbidly emotional ; or naive imagery reflecting the prejudice of the ignorant ; or the hallucination of those obsessed with a fixed idea ; or the wilful lie of the imposter—all or any one of these can claim the dignity of knowledge

acquired by direct experience, can usurp the authority of absolute truth discovered in the super-sensual way.

Of course, the believers in the doctrine of direct experience will retort that it is open to anybody, whosoever may wish, to verify its authenticity. But failure to gain the experience is attributed to the lack of spiritual uplift necessary for the attainment of the state of beatitude. Thus, a premium is placed on imposture or self-deception. Whoever would admit spiritual inferiority when there is an easy escape from that disgrace? Whoever would resist the temptation of being acclaimed a seer when the highest price for the honour might not be more than a bit of self-deception, if not an actual lie. The holy profession is not overcrowded because the innate rationalism of man sets a limit to its advantages. The profession thrives in an inverse ratio to rationalism. The greater the ignorance of a people, the more widespread will be the belief in direct experience, in revelation.

Even with the damaging distinction of direct experience, Indian philosophy cannot claim superiority to western idealism. Plato is the father of that classical school of philosophy. His metaphysical speculations directly went into the ecstasy of the Alexandrian mystics. Since then, throughout the Middle-Ages, ecstasy was an article of Christian faith. The mediæval saints all experienced divine

light in their inner selves—saw divinity face to face. Modern idealism set out to destroy the dogma; but after an initial period of brilliant success, it got scared away by its own shadow cast ahead, and degenerated into a rationalist faith, a scientific religion. It came to scoff, but stayed to pray. In our days, modern idealism also has set up the doctrine of pure experience, and resurrected the dogma of “religious experience”.

Idealism was predestined to go that way. By its very nature, it was bound to land in the quiet backwaters of religious experience. Mystical metaphysics was inherent in its being. A denial, be it open or through subterfuge, of the objective reality of things outside our consciousness, necessarily throws us back upon introspective speculation in search of an absolute criterion of truth. The doctrine of the objective existence of immaterial ideas inevitably leads to the conclusion that the physical organs of cognition cannot present us with a complete picture of things to be known. Immaterial categories cannot be within the reach of sensory organs. Mind, in so far as it is fed by the organs, can not conceive those transcendental categories. They are therefore matters of intuition. So, we are back again to the familiar dogma of revelation. Only, the “scientific” idealists of our days naturally do not use the old religious terminology. They invent scientific terms to express an old dogma. Anyhow,



the conceptions of direct experience, pure experience, religious experience, are not altogether foreign to contemporary western idealism. Indeed, idealist philosophy degenerated into this sort of esoteric speculation preparatory to the rise of the contemporary mysticism as the ideology of the epoch of capitalist decay.

A contemporary philosophical writer, himself a modern theologian, makes the following observation on the nature and validity of direct or religious experience : "The truest visions of religion are illusions, which may be partially realised by being resolutely believed. For what religion believes to be true, is not wholly true, but ought to be true; and may become true if its truth is not doubted." (Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*). The replacement of intelligence by illusion as the basis of philosophy is not a peculiarity of India, and therefore it can hardly serve the purpose of providing evidence of its superiority. Pointing out that in the history of Europe intelligence was often overwhelmed by "habits and traditions", one of the foremost western philosophers of our time writes : "At critical times, widespread illusions, generated by intense emotions, have played a role, in comparison with which the influence of intelligence is negligible." (John Dewey, *Intelligence and Power*).

Indian philosophy, which makes the vain effort

to seek immutable truths beyond the reach of intelligence, was the product of such critical times in the past. Contemporary western idealism has degenerated into a similar state of introspection because of the crisis of the modern capitalist civilisation. In either case, intelligence is replaced by emotion, tradition and illusion, in order to reinforce the shaken position of vested interests. Pleading for "the attitude of mind exemplified in the conquest of nature by the experimental sciences", Dewey says : "The alternative is dogmatism, reinforced by the weight of unquestioned custom and tradition, the disguised or open play of class interest, dependence upon brute force and violence."

Such is the nature and significance of western idealism, when it is divested of intelligence and reason, which originally distinguished it from the earlier forms of religious metaphysical speculations, Indian as well as western. Western idealism was different from Indian philosophy when it rejected the religious dogma of revealed truth, fought faith with the weapons of reason and intelligence.

Although western idealism, as long as it remained on the strictly philosophical ground, did have some points of difference with the mystic theology of India, recently the difference has disappeared owing to its own mystic-metaphysical deviations. Consequently, the spiritual message of

India has become superfluous, the West having found a similar mission in its own traditions of Christian morality and mysticism. It is, however, extremely difficult to find out what exactly is the message of India. The difficulty arises from the fact that Indian philosophy embraces a heterogeneous, often conflicting, body of speculative thought. The principles of Indian culture have been differently stated by the various schools of its modern interpreters. Emphasis has been laid respectively on religion, positive thought, emotional values, moral standards, so on and so forth. The confusion is due to the failure of the interpreters of Indian culture to view its development in the historical perspective. Those who glorify it as the highwater mark of human culture and propose to impose it on the world are, paradoxically, incapable of appreciating its merits properly, to discover its positive outcome.

The *Sanatan Dharma*, however, is generally accepted as the embodiment of the basic principles of Hindu culture. *Sanatan Dharma*, as the very name implies, is a body of religiously conceived social doctrines, which claim eternal validity. It was not only beneficial in the past, but would be equally so if it were practised to-day, and offers the panacea for the future. It is maintained that India's present plight is due to her deviation from the path of the eternal truth revealed in the *Sanatan*

*Dharma.* Back on that path, she would surely return to the Golden Age and set an example to the world tormented by materialism. It is not explained why India herself deviated from her destiny. Why did her "spiritual genius" fail to keep her on the right road? Then, the ideal itself is also a puzzle. It has been variously interpreted as a religion, a faith, a system of philosophy, a code of morals. Whatever it might have been in the past, we must judge it on its present showing. We must analyse it as it presents itself to the world as the cure for all its troubles and tribulations.

For an authoritative statement of the principles of *Sanatan Dharma*, and its prescriptions for curing India as well as the rest of the world of the canker of modern civilisation, we shall quote from an address to the conference of its defenders and exponents, held in Calcutta in September 1933. The presence of Jagatguru Sri Shankaracharya vouched for the representative character of the conference, and placed the stamp of authenticity on the views expressed on that occasion.

The president of the conference, M. K. Acharya, denounced the law against child marriage as the product of "the slave mentality of the unthinking," and stigmatised Gandhi's agitation for temple entry as "ausaric" (demoniac). Then he proceeded: such attacks are going "to whip up

all lovers of *Sanatan Dharma* to unite in defence of the higher laws of life. Such *dharmic* awakening is necessary for the larger interests of India and of the world at large. Very soon, every country on earth will be faced with problems that cannot be solved without a fundamental change in the mental and moral outlook from a hankering after sense gratification, which is the goal of western materialism, to a striving after sense control, which is the essence of India's *dharmic* culture. India for millennia has been the privileged home of *Sanatan Dharma* that teaches how every man and woman, according to their birth and environment, must practise *swadharma* or self-control, must evolve their higher nature, and so realise the bliss of Divinity deep-seated in the heart of all beings. For this bliss, all humanity blindly pants, not knowing that neither cigarettes and cinemas and sense enjoyment nor superficial democracy nor temple entry can lead them to the path of *dharmic* discipline, through which alone the highest bliss can be realised. It is for India to reveal this path to the modern world. Let us wake up and qualify ourselves for this great world mission. Let us not be obsessed with either the artificial temple entry agitation of people who have no faith in temple worship, or with the superficial White Paper Scheme (of the Indian Constitution) drawn up by people who do not know the

genius of India. Both are bound to do more harm than good, unless fundamentally recast—the one in consonance with the true religion of God-love, the other in consonance with the higher principles of Swaraj.”

Indian nationalists in general would vigorously repudiate the pretension of the president of the *Sanatan Dharma* conference to represent the spirit of Indian culture. But that would be for political reasons. His enunciation of “India’s message to the world” as well as his statement of the cardinal principles of Indian culture, is quite commensurate with the prevalent nationalist ideology. The indignant outburst of the champion of *Sanatan Dharma* may be marred by frivolity here and there ; but there is no flaw in his logic. He is not half-hearted in his belief. He is a whole-hogger—an unblushing full-blooded reactionary. He knows that any political advance, even that mighty little proposed in the White Paper scheme, might take India further away from the cherished ideals of *Sanatan Dharma*. Therefore, he is not ashamed of opposing political progress in the interest of cultural reaction. His position is much more logical than that of those who would combine political progress with cultural reaction.

The attack against Gandhi may be another ground on which the representative character of Mr. Acharya’s views will be disputed. That, how-

ever, is a very insecure ground. The Mahatma himself has admitted the legitimacy of the Sanatanist opposition to his agitation for temple entry and removal of untouchability. He would not have his pet hobbies enforced by law. His proclaimed desire is to introduce these superficial measures of social and religious reform with the approval of the die-hard orthodox. Besides, the Mahatma himself is an avowed protagonist of the *Sanatan Dharma*, and fully believes in the spiritual ideals and moral principles adumbrated by Mr. Acharya.

Purged of the political tendency (which, by the way, is quite logical) and the attack upon Gandhi, the statement of Mr. Acharya could be made by any other preacher of India's spiritual mission, be he a Rabindranath Tagore or a Mahatma Gandhi or any orthodox Congressman or an Arya Samajist or a member of the Hindu Mahasabha or a Vedantist of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Mission or a modern intellectual like Sir Radhakrishnan. This being the case, the views of the venerable president of the *Sanatan Dharma* conference can be taken as representative, and analysed to explain the real nature of India's culture and the significance of her message to the world.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Acharya, we have actually an embarrassment of riches. The

picture presented by him is so very complete that hardly any retouching is necessary to make its meaning clear. The social basis of Indian culture is naively laid bare. The function of the "higher laws of life" is clearly indicated. In the past, it was to maintain the ruling classes in their positions of power and privilege. To-day it is to hold together the withered limbs of a decayed social organism. "The essence of India's *dharmaic* culture" is such an elaborate system of taboos and repressions upon the natural inclinations of the masses as spells a decisive check against the normal forces of social evolution.

The keynote of the culture which is offered to the world for its salvation is "self-control". Fortunately, we are not left in doubt about the real meaning of this oft-repeated formula. "*Sanatan Dharma* teaches how every man and woman, according to their birth and environments, must practise *swadharma* or self-control." So, the spiritual genius of Indian culture consists in its success to have taught everybody to be reconciled to his fate. His or her position in society is fixed for ever. Self-control means willing subordination to the established system of social slavery. The "higher nature" evolved through the practice of the sterling virtue of self-control is slave-mentality. That is the ideal of Indian culture placed before the masses. And this ideal of slave-mentality, intellec-



tual inertia, moral death, lack of all signs of life, except the faithful discharge of duty prescribed by the ruling class—that is the way to “divine bliss”, which the slave must find in his own self as the consolation for the depressing blankness of life. The function of the “divinity deep-seated in the heart of all beings” therefore is to keep the slave out of harm’s length, to keep him in the bliss of ignorance, so that the idea of changing the conditions of his life, of ever encroaching upon the preserves of the master, may never occur to him.

Sense enjoyment is, of course, taboo. Not only such frivolities as cigarettes and cinemas disturb *dharmaic* discipline, but democracy is also detrimental to the realisation of “the highest bliss”! The purpose of *dharmaic* discipline thus is to reduce the material necessities of life to the lowest conceivable level. This is the moral ideal of a static society—of a society which has ceased to grow, and whose retarded growth, in its turn, kills all impulse of life in its fossilised organism. In a static society, wealth is not produced in a progressively larger volume. Unless consumption is reduced to the lowest possible level, the margin of surplus wealth will be very narrow. The income of the ruling classes, which under such conditions usually are an alliance of the priesthood and patriarchal-feudal aristocracy, goes down. Out of this mundane background rise the moral principles of

the *Sanatan Dharma*. The fewer the necessities of the masses, the more earthly possessions accrue to the aristocratic rulers, who can thus live in splendour, opulence and luxury, while their sacerdotal allies preach the virtues of self-control, abstemiousness, simplicity, as the roads to a higher life. Apart from its flagrant immorality, this *dharmic* discipline is a decisive check upon the progress of the community as a whole. Expanding consumption is an impetus to the development of the productive forces. The consuming capacity of the most luxurious and extravagant ruling class is limited by their numerical smallness. Therefore, the restriction even of the elementary requirements of the masses by an elaborate system of taboos and repressions, buttressed upon dogmatic religious doctrines, has a reactionary influence upon the entire society. *Sanatan Dharma*, rising as the ideology of social stagnation, condemned the Indian people to a process of slow cultural death in the interest of a privileged minority.

By prohibiting sense enjoyment, the *dharmic* discipline raises ignorance to the dignity of highest virtue. Consequently, it places a premium on prejudice which thrives on ignorance. And prejudice precludes all cultural progress. Experience gained through sense perception is the only road to knowledge ; and knowledge is the basis of culture. Condemn sense enjoyment, and you block man's

road to knowledge ; you sentence him to perpetual barbarism. It is absurd to distinguish one sense enjoyment from another. If it is sinful to smoke a cigarette, it is equally perverse to listen to music. If it is forbidden to feast one's eyes on feminine beauty, the joy of looking at a rose or of watching the sun-set or even admiring artistically made images of gods and goddesses, cannot be logically permitted. If the natural sex instinct is to be suppressed, the equally natural hunger for food and thirst for water should not also be tolerated. The absurd taboo on sense enjoyment has no moral force. It is rooted in the vulgar-materialist interest of the ruling class. Firstly, its object is to keep the masses on the lowest level of physical existence so that they may consume the smallest fraction of the fruits of their labour, and consequently the lion's share go to the parasitic classes. Secondly, to keep the masses in the bliss of ignorance, so that they could be exploited all the better.

The basic principle of *Sanatan Dharma* being that the social position of the individual is fixed by birth, it can naturally have no use for democracy. Any political advance of the Indian people must be "in consonance with the higher principles of Swaraj". These higher principles in the domain of politics have not yet been formulated. But presumably, they must be governed by the basic principles of the *Sanatan Dharma*, which admit-

tedly excludes democracy. Since social position is predetermined by birth, and the individuals must perform the functions respectively allotted to them, presumably by the Providence, the position of those belonging to the upper strata of society is as unchangeable as that of those lower down in the social scale. Thus, we have a stratified social organisation, rigidly held together by *Sanatan Dharma*, which itself is immutable, and eternally valid, as its name implies. To possess slaves is a divinely sanctioned right of the slave-owner, just as to serve his master is the religious duty of the slave. If this "spiritual message" of *Sanatan Dharma* could possibly be conveyed to the masses of the western peoples, undoubtedly their rulers would be highly thankful to India. What surer guarantee could be available to delapidated capitalism than the conversion of its victims to the cult of the "highest bliss of *Sanatan Dharma*", to be attained through voluntary submission to the lowest possible standard of living? But there is little chance of *Sanatan Dharma* succeeding in this ambitious world mission. India herself must throw off the yoke of her precious spiritual genius, if she wishes to escape further degeneration, demoralisation and utter destruction.

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The most commonly agreed form of India's world message is Gandhism. Not only does it

dominate the nationalist ideology ; it has found some echo outside of India. It is as the moralising mysticism of Gandhi that Indian thought makes any appeal to the western mind. Therefore, an analysis of Gandhism will give a correct idea of the real nature of India's message to the world.

But Gandhism is not a co-ordinated system of thought. There is little of philosophy in it. In the midst of a mass of platitudes and hopeless self-contradictions, it harps on one constant note—a conception of morality based upon dogmatic faith. But what Gandhi preaches is primarily a religion : the faith in God is the only reliable guide in life. The fact that even in the twentieth century India is swayed by the naive doctrines of Gandhi speaks for the cultural backwardness of the masses of her people. The subtlety of the Hindu philosophy is not the measure of the intellectual level of the Indian people as a whole. It was the brain-child of a pampered intellectual élite sharing power and privileges with the temporal ruling class. It still remains confined to the comparatively small circle of intellectuals who try to put on a thin veneer of modernism, and represent nothing more than a nostalgia. The popularity of Gandhi and the uncritical acceptance of his antics as the highest of human wisdom knock the bottom off the doctrine that the Indian people as a whole is morally and spiritually superior to the western.

The fact is that the great bulk of the Indian people are steeped in religious superstitions. Otherwise, Gandhism would have no social background, and disappear before long. They have neither any understanding of philosophical problems nor are they concerned with metaphysical speculations in preference to material questions. As normal human beings, they are engrossed with the problems of worldly life, and, being culturally backward, necessarily thinks in terms of religion, conceive their earthly ideals, their egoistic aspirations, in religious forms. Faith is the mainstay of their existence ; prejudice, the trusted guide of life ; and superstition their only philosophy.

Gandhism is the ideological reflex of this social background. It sways the mass mind, not as a moral philosophy, but as a religion. It is neither a philosopher nor a moralist who has become the idol of the Indian people. The masses pay their homage to a Mahatma—a source of revealed wisdom and agency of super-natural power. The social basis of Gandhism is cultural backwardness ; its intellectual mainstay, superstition.

It has found some response in the West also not as a system of philosophy, but as a cult of religious morality which, if accepted by the masses, might be helpful in saving the tottering structure of capitalism—in stemming the tide of revolution.

Gandhi calls himself a man of the masses. He is supposed to be the champion of the poor. He has demonstratively taken the vow of voluntary poverty. He is believed by his educated followers to be the most powerful enemy of capitalism. He has been acclaimed by the more adoring disciples as the greatest Socialist. Yet, the curious thing is that the message of Gandhism appeals not so much to the oppressed masses of the West as to the capitalist ruling class and its ideologists. In India, many a leader of materialist commerce and "soul-killing" industrialism are among the most devout disciples as well as generous patrons of the avowed enemy of capitalism. Are the capitalist rulers of the West perchance getting converted to the cult of voluntary poverty? Or is India shunning the sinful path of industrialism at the behest of the Mahatma? There is not the slightest reason to believe that such a miracle can be wrought by the modern Saint.

But it is not difficult to find an explanation of the curious spectacle. The explanation is provided by the Mahatma himself. On his way back from London, after the second Round Table Conference at the end of 1931, he gave a long press interview in which he summarised the message that he had delivered to the West. At the same time, he made the following characteristic and highly significant declaration of faith: "So long

as I believe in a benevolent God, I must believe that the world is getting better, even though I see evidence to the contrary."

This can be taken as the central point of Gandhism. It is the philosophy of blind faith. Nothing can be more beneficial to the established order of things, be it in the West or in the East, than the propagation of this blind faith and the acceptance of a code of religious morality based upon a dogmatic belief. This is the spiritual message of India which finds some response in the West, and may possibly have a greater success. Because, it fits in with the ideological needs of the western capitalist society in decay ; because it provides a moral justification and a super-human sanction for social injustice and for the entire system of exploitation of man by man.

Love, goodness, sacrifice, simplicity, absolute non-violence (in thought as well as in deed)—these are the moral precepts preached by Gandhi. They are all categorical imperatives, being based upon a blind faith. They are all immutable, being different forms of the self-same transcendental truth, manifestations of the divine will. What would be the result if these noble moral precepts were practised at large ? It should be noted that Gandhi, like a true prophet, delivers his message to the masses. That is the most important point to be borne in mind while examining Gandhism.



Addressed to the masses, the spiritual and moral message of Gandhi means a direct support for its antithesis, for what it pretends to combat, namely, for vulgar materialism. Love, goodness, sacrifice, simplicity, absolute non-violence all these admirable virtues practised by the masses would strengthen the position of power and privilege of those who personify the love of lucre. The faith in the benevolence of God, the belief that the inequities of the established social order are all for the good, would simply enable the masses to bear their cross of sorrow and suffering cheerfully. Those who are making profit out of these ungodly conditions of the God's world would thrive. The practice of the virtues preached by Gandhi would mean voluntary submission of the masses to the established system of oppression and exploitation. If the workers could be taught to love their employers, capitalism would be spared labour troubles which aggravate in proportion as it decays. Wage-slaves performing labour of love, wealth would freely accumulate in the hands of the employers. Social peace would secure the position of capitalism. The ideal of goodness would keep the masses away from the evil of envying the rich as well as of the desire to harm those who thrive at their expense. Inspired by the noble spirit of sacrifice, the masses would readily offer themselves at the altar of capitalist greed ; they would not then resent and revolt

against their lot ; they would not look upon their privations and poverty as the result of the established social relations, but as token of their own sublimation. Simplicity on the part of the masses will be a guarantee for the unequal distribution of wealth, the lion's share accruing to the upper classes. Finally, non-violence—the *pièce de résistance* of Gandhism. This is the central pivot of the entire philosophy, holding its quaint dogmas and naive doctrines together into a comprehensive system of highly reactionary thought.

The cult of non-violence is exactly the opposite of what it appears to be. It offers a direct aid to violence in practice. Every form of class-ridden society is maintained by indirect violence. Therefore, those who preach non-violence, to be scrupulously observed at all cost by the exploited and oppressed masses, are defenders of violence in practice. Non-violence, practised by the oppressed and exploited, would offer the surest guarantee to any social system maintained by violence, directly or indirectly. It would mean disappearance of all opposition to capitalism. In the absence of all opposition, all desire and effort to overthrow it, capitalism would become permanent. India's spiritual message delivered by Gandhi, if accepted by the West, would thus keep the latter tied for ever to the wheels of the chariot of the Juggernaut of vulgar materialism. Love, the sentimental counter-

part of the cult of non-violence, thus is exposed as a mere cant.

It might be argued that absolute non-violence, in thought as well as in deed, on the part of the masses, would obviate the necessity of the use of violence by the ruling classes. Indeed, Gandhi's proposition to overcome violence by non-violence must have some such idea behind it. Non-violence, then, means absolute submission of the masses to the established order of oppression and exploitation. The ruling class might possibly lay aside the weapon of coercion when the very least danger to their position of privilege would disappear. Even then they would not be converted to the divine doctrine of non-violence ; they would simply suspend active application of violence in the absence of any necessity thereof. The weapons would not be discarded; they would be laid aside, to be put to use whenever there would be the slightest suspicion of danger. As long as the slave revels in his slavery, being utterly incapacitated either by his own ignorance or by a subtle propaganda, even to dream of freedom, the knout need not be used. But the slave remains a slave ; the existence of slavery implies the parallel existence of the slave-owner ; and the knout is an integral part of the slave-owner, just as teeth and claws are that of the tiger. Owning slaves out of love is a utopian dream, which will never be realised.

The Gandhist utopia thus is a static society—a state of absolute social stagnation. It is an utopia because it can never be realised. Absolute stagnation is identical with death. To begin with, all resistance to the established order must cease. That would offer absolute guarantee to the *status quo*. The ruling classes would refrain from using force simply because it would not be necessary. Their power and privilege, being completely undisputed, would require no active defence. But this idyllic picture can be drawn only by the cold hand of death. Life expresses itself as movement—individually, in space, and collectively, in time. And movement implies overwhelming of obstacles on the way. Disappearance of all resistance to the established order would mean extinction of social life. Perfect peace reigns only in the grave.

Neither the preachers nor the proselytes of Gandhism, however, would have the consistency of carrying their cult to the nihilistic extreme. There would be a certain macabre majesty in such a boldness. But with all the absoluteness of its standards, Gandhism remains on the ground of the relative. After all, it prescribes a practical cure for the evils of the world. Philosophically, it is pragmatic. And the remedy suggested is the reactionary programme of forcibly keeping society in a relatively static condition. Gandhism offers this programme because it is the quintessence of an

ideology which developed on the background of a static society.

But India's spiritual message, while still finding an echo in the ruins of the native society, can have no standing appeal to the world of modern civilisation. There, the society is armed with potentialities which preclude its falling into a state of stagnation. Modern civilisation is a dynamic process. It must go forward. Not only the masses, but even the capitalist rulers of the West must reject the ideology of social stagnation. And precisely in this dynamic nature of the civilisation, developed under its aegis, does the Nemesis of capitalism lie. It cannot carry civilisation farther, nor can it hold it back in a static state permanently as a guarantee for its continued existence. The perspective, therefore, is an advance of modern civilisation over the boundaries of capitalism. The materialist philosophy throws a flood of light on that perspective of the future of mankind. India's spiritual message, on the contrary, would teach the West to turn back upon the goal within reach, and relapse into mediaeval barbarism.

A detailed critique of Gandhism is not a part of our present purpose. The point sought to be made here is the social significance of the spiritual message of India. That will be done by looking a little more closely at a few—the more prominent—of the gods of Gandhism. This critical examina-

tion will reveal their clay-feet. The vulgar-materialist implication of the spiritual message will be evident. It will be seen that, in this age of rationalist thought and scientific knowledge, spiritualist philosophy, be it western or Indian, has but one social role to play, namely, to defend the established order of class domination. In its zeal to perform this none too glorious role, spiritualism falls foul of modern civilisation, the great accomplishments of which have brought man face to face with spiritual emancipation, not as a fantasy but as a reality. Hitherto it has been an illusion.

In order to appreciate a system of thought properly, it is necessary to go down to the concrete points made by it, to discuss its positive propositions. Gandhism talks *ad nauseum* of love, truth, goodness, etc. These are propagated as abstract categories which defy definition. They may mean any thing or nothing. Besides, they have been preached in all ages, and never have these noble virtues been in theory rejected by man, individually or collectively, in the East or in the West. They have always been the ideals of man. Since they have never been defined so as to command a common acceptance, it is not fair to accuse any man or community of discrepancy between profession and practice. Therefore, it would be dogmatic to charge western civilisation of having abandoned these traditional ideals, just as it would be

gratuitous to claim that Gandhism represents their practical application to life. We must either give both the parties the credit of following those ideals, or suspect them alike of hypocrisy. These elusive shibboleths do not take us anywhere. They do not enlighten us as to what exactly is the world message of Gandhism—this typical product of India's spiritual genius.

But there are other points of Gandhism which can be examined with greater success. In examining them, we find ourselves on the solid ground of the concrete. They are not mere abstractions, empty of any content of reality. They are precepts whose real meaning can be easily read by putting them into practice. For one thing, there is faith, which has played such an important part in the spiritual development of man. The basis of modern civilisation, scientific knowledge, is incompatible with faith ; whereas Gandhism proudly declares its faith in the divine will. Mankind begins its journey towards real spiritual liberation by leaving the traditional ground of faith. Faith is born of ignorance. If the world remained in the mental state evidenced by the Gandhist confession of faith, it would make no progress. The faithful, unless their profession is hypocritical, are debarred from doing anything to change a given condition of the world. For, otherwise, they would be violating the divine will, interfering with provi-

dential arrangement. They cannot have such antithetical ideas as good and evil, right and wrong, love and hatred, so on and so forth. God being benevolent, the embodiment of goodness, justice, love, everything in the world happening in the world must be good and right. Can there be anything more convenient to those who enjoy worldly power and privilege, than this divine philosophy of truth ? The masses accepting the established order as divinely ordained, as willed by a benevolent God, its security is guaranteed by the religious view of life. The upper classes can enjoy their power and privileges without any anxiety. Such is the social significance of the spiritual value called faith. And faith is the corner-stone of Gandhism. The whole body of orthodox Hindu philosophy rests upon the self-same corner-stone. It starts from the assumption of a super-natural spiritual being, and sets itself the impossible task of knowing the unknowable. Naturally, it traces knowledge to revelation. Illusion is the source of illumination.

India's message to the world is, therefore, a message of faith. Gandhi has acquired the proud distinction of the acknowledged bearer of this message, because he has the honesty to deliver it in all its nakedness. He has the courage of the fanatic. He is not ashamed of professing a mediæval faith, because the bliss of his ignorance is undisturbed by the modern Indian intellectual's zeal to be fashion-



ably scientific. The message of faith, however, is the message of mediævalism—the call of the wild. For centuries, Europe remained fascinated by this call. Finally, it found a way out of the wilderness, and remade the world with scant regard for the Providence. The foundation of faith has been irreparably shaken by science. It has been discovered that the conditions of life are not providentially ordained ; that they are created by man and therefore can be altered by man. This epoch-making lesson of modern civilisation will enable humanity to overcome the present crisis. It is a guarantee against the civilised peoples of the West relapsing under the spell of mediæval faith.

Now, for more concrete points of the message of Gandhism, let us hear the prophet himself. In the interview referred to above, he said : “The strongest impression I am carrying home from Europe is that Europe cannot for any length of time sustain the artificial life its people are living to-day, because that life is too materialistic. There must be a return to simplicity and proper proportions. The flesh has gained precedence over the spirit. The machine age is ruling western civilisation. Over-production and lack of the means of proper distribution may finally spell the doom of capitalist society. The only solution I see is a return to hand industry and the emancipation of the individual from factory slavery. It would be an

eventful day in the life of great countries like England and the U.S.A. to adopt the spinning wheel."

There we have a clear and concise statement of all the practical points of Gandhism—from the sublime to the ridiculous. The sublime is the vision of a life free from the vulgar-materialistic extravagances of the capitalist society ; the ridiculous is the prescription of the patent medicine of the spinning wheel. Anyone with the least understanding of the economic problems of the world to-day and some knowledge of their background can see that the prescribed solution is ridiculous.

Let us make a careful note of the fact that the evangelical zeal of this statement runs counter to the equally fervent confession of faith made in the same interview. The belief in a benevolent God must not permit the Mahatma to look upon the world with an eye of criticism or even of uneasiness. \* He must not only take the things as they are, but believe that they are "getting better even though I see evidence to the contrary". But vanity often overwhelms the piety of the prophet. The message of India claims universal application, and disregards the limit of time on the strength of being inspired. Once it deviates from the fountain of faith, it loses its peculiarity, and must be submitted to the criteria of human reason. The message of the Mahatma is obviously contrary to his faith.

The world is always getting better by the grace of God, if not thanks to the creative genius of man ; then, how could the Mahatma maintain that the mediæval world was better than the modern ? To hold this view, as the Mahatma expressly does, is to discard the article of faith preached by himself. According to the fundamental principle of Gandhism, indeed of the spiritualist philosophy of all shapes and colour, namely, the belief in a supernatural force as the guiding factor of the Universe, capitalism is providentially ordained. It is not permissible to tinker with the God's world. The pretension to improve upon the work of God is blasphemous. Gandhi irreverently sits in judgment on the wisdom of God, while proclaiming to the world that faith in the benevolent God is the safest guide in life ! His censure of modern civilisation and the prophetic view that Europe is doomed unless it goes back several hundred years, amounts to this. He appears to declare that God made a mistake in allowing events that took place in Europe during the last two-hundred years, and presumes to rectify the lamentable mistake committed by the infallible divine intelligence. And this irreverent task he sets to himself as the prophet to whom has been revealed the path to the salvation of the modern world. A message vitiated with such hopeless internal contradiction can hardly claim a serious consideration.

**Spiritualist philosophy, however, cannot but be self-contradictory.** It is not worried by this defect, which can be easily explained by its basic dogma, that the divine will is inscrutable. A consistent spiritualist must be a solipsist. If there was really an absolute being as the origin of the phenomenal world, the world would never be created. The very absoluteness of the supreme principle would preclude it from functioning as the cause of the world. The very godliness of God would not allow him to act as the religious believe him to act. If anyone really believes, as Gandhi with all the spiritualists does, that everything in the world takes place according to a divine will, mysterious purpose or super-natural force, then he must sit quiet and watch the unfolding of the divine drama or contemplate the incomprehensible. Whatever he may do, his own faith would preclude any activity on his part. The spiritualist tries to extricate himself out of this tight corner—a position to which he is driven by the logic of his own philosophy—with the argument that his activity is also caused by the divine will. But his argument falls to the ground as soon as he really acts. Because, immediately he runs counter to his faith. His action or even thought inevitably clashes with that of some others. Thus, he runs counter to the divine will. For, the action or thought of the others is also an expression of the divine will. Indeed, the faithful must accept

every act of God as good. He must be completely satisfied; and satisfaction precludes all activities. The faithful cannot appear as a prophet. He can not be a reformer, because the zeal to reform the world testifies to a lack of faith in the benevolence and justness of God. The very idea that the world needs reform represents a doubt about the omniscience and infallibility of God. Gandhi is the classical example of a prophet who claims to act according to his profession.

This may appear to be a most unfounded critique of Gandhism. Have not the sworn opponents of Gandhi admitted his sincerity? The retort is beside the point. The man Gandhi is not the subject matter of our examination. We are analysing a philosophy which not only claims superiority in the past, but proposes to lead the world in the future. We are not concerned with the sincerity or otherwise of a person. We are exposing the fallacy and contradictions of the message delivered by him. If the message is found to be riddled with fallacies and vitiated by contradictions, the sincerity or saintliness of the Messiah would be of no avail. And we have already detected many flaws; let us proceed undeterred by personal considerations. The awe of authority stands on the way to truth.

Being contrary to his faith in providential ordinance, Gandhi's message cannot claim the indisputable authority of revealed truth. It must

then be judged on its own merit. It is the business of the prophet, if he presumes to know better than his God. Our concern is to see whether the remedy suggested by him would really cure the evils of capitalism. Here we touch the social philosophy of Gandhi. We have already noted the anti-capitalist sentiment prevalent among Indian spiritualists. We have also pointed out the reactionary nature of the apparently revolutionary sentiment. Gandhi's view of the conditions of contemporary Europe, together with his prescription to cure them, bears out our contention.

While expressing the familiar sentiments regarding the Western civilisation, the bearer of India's spiritual message does not hide his concern for the security of the capitalist social order. He deplores "over-production" and lack of the "means of proper distribution", because they might "spell the doom of capitalist society." If Gandhi were for the abolition of capitalism, why should he be troubled by the spectre of its doom? On the contrary, he should welcome the perspective. Of course, the solution he offers is not expressly to save capitalism from the threatened doom. But capitalism is not the object of his denouncement. It is modern civilisation. Thus, the doctor pathetically fails to lay his finger on the disease which he undertakes to cure. Instead of curing the patient, he proposes to kill him. He would not rescue

modern civilisation from the paralysing grip of capitalism ; he would wipe out civilisation itself.

Let us suppose that Europe responded to the call of Gandhism. What would be the result of that exemplary repentance on the part of the sinner ? ' Machines would be replaced by the spinning wheel ; consequently, production would be reduced so as to eliminate automatically the problem of distribution. The standard of living would go down to the level of simplicity. In plain language, Gandhi would lead the world back to the Middle-Ages. But what is the guarantee that society would remain stationary in that idealised state ? Then, if "return to simplicity" is the highest ideal, where are we going to draw the line ? Why should society stop at mediæval barbarism ? Why should it not go all the way back to primitive savagery ? Hand industry and the holy wheel are not the token of primitive simplicity. Man had lived a far simpler life before he reached the stage at which he wore woven garments and used other manufactured articles. If simplicity is the ideal of human nature, then the march back must not stop until mankind has reverted to the stage in which its requirements are the most minimum. That is to say, the ideal human being is the savage living on the tree, clothed in his nakedness and subsisting on roots and fruits.

To avoid being driven to this ridiculous posi-

tion, Gandhi qualifies the ideal of simplicity by the phrase "proper proportions". But it does not help to draw the line arbitrarily. What are the proper proportions of simplicity? Who is going to decide what is the standard of simplicity? If you permit mankind to progress from primitive savagery to mediæval barbarism, by what logic are you going to prohibit further progress towards modern civilisation? Once you admit that it is not immoral nor sinful for mankind to progress, you have no reason to set a limit to that process. India's message to the world is so fallacious because the vision of the Indian spiritualist is limited by the social background of his culture. For historical reasons, Indian society lingered in the twilight of mediævalism. That unfortunate state of social stagnation came to be idealised. Indian spiritualists want to impose their false ideal upon the world which has had the opportunity of realising higher ideals and of visualising still higher ones. They want to remake the world on the image of the backwardness of Indian society.

But to those people who fought their way out of mediæval darkness to attain the higher stage of modern civilisation, the ideal held out by the Indian spiritualists has no appeal. Having outgrown it themselves, they cannot look upon mediæval society as the normal state of human existence. Their vision is not circumscribed by the



material and cultural backwardness of the mediæval society. It has been widened by modern civilisation. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the conditions of life in the capitalist society impels them to look ahead—to strive to go farther, bursting the bounds of capitalism. They don't look backwards. They are precluded from doing so by their own experience. Experience has taught them that a dynamic society, a human community healthily breeding the germs of progress in its own organism, in course of time outgrows mediæval conditions to enter the stage of modern civilisation. If they went back, that would be only to repeat the experience. That would be only to postpone the solution of the problems raised by modern civilisation. Their task is to solve those problems, not to run away from them, only to be back again in the same position.

The proposal for a return to hand industry obviously is based upon ignorance of the history of modern civilisation. The modern machine industry has grown directly out of the background of the mediæval handicrafts. Man has always used tools to gain his livelihood. The ability to use some sort of a tool in addition to his own bodily organs differentiates man from his animal ancestors. To use tools, therefore, is a normal human function, and the progressive improvement of the tool with which he earns his subsistence is the indicator of the cultural advance of man. When man learns

the use of metal, he reaches a cultural level much higher than that of his predecessor of the stone age. Would the Gandhists or any other prophet, of neo-medievalism dispute this elementary law of human evolution? If the metal-using man is culturally more advanced than the savage with the stone-flint, the man of the machine age must be proportionately superior to the artisan of the Middle-Ages. Machine is but the most highly developed tool. It is a part of normal human existence, just as much as the tools of hand industry. You cannot advise mankind to discard the machine without declaring by implication, if not in so many words, that the use of tools is incompatible with humanness. Because, then you would be identifying humanness with animalness; for, the use of tools is the line of demarcation between animal and man.

Again, to avoid taking up this fantastic position, an arbitrary line is drawn. It is permissible to use tools up to a certain fixed level of development. But thus far and no farther. The advance from the *takli* to the *charkha* takes place within the bounds of normal humanness. But the road from the *charkha* to the spinning Jenny is the road to perdition. The journey on that road corrupts the humanity in man, makes an abominable materialist of him, his spirit is overwhelmed by the flesh! This absurd theory of culture has regard neither

for logic nor for the very elementary principles of economy.

The advocates of this theory maintain that modern machine makes a slave of man; a return to hand industry would restore man to his individual freedom. Another illusion! The function of the tool is to help man earn his subsistence with the minimum of effort and time. In modern industry, man can earn a living in return for eight hours work a day. The amount of daily labour could be easily reduced by half. On the contrary, in handicrafts, man must work twelve hours or more to get the same result. And if a limit is set to the development of tools, he will have no prospect of ever getting out of the drudgery. To attend to one or several fly-shuttles for eight hours a day in a modern factory turns a man into the slave of the machine; but plying the spinning wheel for twelve hours, he becomes a free man, able to soar high spiritually! The change in his mode of occupation would place him on a higher cultural level, although it would lower the standard of his material existence! But that exactly is the desired result. Freed from materialistic temptations, back to simplicity, man would recover his humanness. A remarkable theory of culture—the more man labours, the less he eats, the higher is his moral worth!

Distressed capitalism, however, is not likely to take the advice of Gandhi, and retire into medi-

aval wilderness to practise *banaprastha* in these years of its decay. With all the neo-mysticism and rationalist religion preached by its philosophers, capitalism does not appear to be the least disposed to don the *gairic* of *bairagya*, and regulate its conduct by the venerable dictum—plain living and high thinking. But it enthusiastically applauds the preaching of the dictum to the masses. It would welcome the propagation of the Gandhist doctrine of simplicity and proper proportions. That is why the spiritualist message of India, delivered by Gandhi, finds some response in the West. Those who welcome it find in it a possible means to arrest the imminent collapse of capitalism. Spiritualism and vulgar materialism have been inseparable allies throughout the ages. To-day they do not stand in any different relation. Gandhi condemns the West for living a life which is too materialistic. But the spiritualist advice given by him means that the masses should so modify their mode of living as would suit the purpose of capitalism in decay. They should return to simplicity and observe self-control—the basic principles of *Sanatan Dharma*.

Gandhi returned from his last visit to Europe with the impression as if the masses of people there were rolling in degenerating luxury. He must think that every European is a millionaire. Otherwise, how could he make the statement quoted above? How could he imagine that Europe as a

whole was living an artificial life which was too materialistic ? How could he assert that the entire European people was dominated by carnal desires ? Evidently, the divine doctor has no knowledge of the disease he wishes to cure by magic. When he visited Europe and gained his remarkable impression, there were millions of unemployed workers, who were living an ideally simple life. Their life was artificial not in the sense meant by Gandhi ; it was artificial because it was burdened with the want of the most minimum necessities in the midst of an abundance. Others, also to be counted in millions, though fortunate to the extent of being employed, were hardly any better off. Their wages had been forced down to the level of a mere subsistence. Since then the conditions have grown worse. Capitalism in decay has reduced the bulk of the western people to such an intolerably miserable condition of life as makes a cataclysmic upheaval almost inevitable, unless some way was found to make the masses be reconciled to their condition. Idealisation of simplicity might serve the purpose. If the masses could be persuaded to feel ennobled in the degradation of their poverty, if the illusion of a spiritual life could make them bear the mortification of the flesh with a pious resignation, then the imminent social revolution might be headed off. Thus, it is as a possible prop for the decayed capitalist society that the spiritualist

message finds a response in the West.

The plea that India's message is meant for the western capitalists also would not be convincing. For them, it would be an advice to commit suicide, and no sane person could believe that such an advice would ever be accepted, save by the insane. If the desire was to reform capitalism, some practical proposal to that effect should be made parallel to the moral sermons addressed to the masses. Gandhi deplores over-production and lack of the means of distribution. Why does he not advise the capitalists to give away their goods to those who are in need instead of sermonising the latter to practise moderation? But he is more concerned with their souls than with the physical well-being of the masses. And as long as anybody disregards their physical well-being and advises them to practise mortification of the flesh, he only serves the interests of those who grow rich out of the poverty of the masses.

The false cry of over-production is raised in the interest of capitalism. Gandhi repeats the cry like a parrot. That may be explained by his ignorance of economics. But there is a logic in his blundering condemnation of the imaginary evil of over-production. Restricted production of goods fits in with his moralising social philosophy. In his opinion, the more goods are produced, the wider becomes the scope of enjoyment, and in consequence

the greater is the corruption of human nature. Gandhi's social philosophy is thus opposed to an economy of abundance, and backs up the economy of scarcity which suits the interests of capitalism in decay. The economy of abundance, that is increased consumption to keep pace with production, has become a social necessity in consequence of technological advance. But it tends to burst the bounds of capitalism. Therefore, to-day the more conservative section of capitalists take up the paradoxical position of advocating the mediæval economy of scarcity. They advocate restricted production, and Gandhism is caught with a strange bed-fellow. But it is not an accidental encounter. It results logically. The spiritualist doctrine of self-control, simple living, voluntary poverty, fits in with the requirements of unsocial capitalism.

## CHAPTER VI

### PRECONDITIONS OF INDIAN RENAISSANCE

THE spiritualist revivalism, mystic extravagances and religious atavism in the recent and contemporary intellectual life of the West are interpreted as indications of repentance on the part of the sinner, and have a galvanising effect on our prejudices in India. A necessary condition for the Renaissance of India, that is to say, for India's coming into the inheritance of the blessings of modern civilisation, is the liberation of the objectively progressive forces from this prejudice. The idle vanity of the would-be saviour of a repenting materialist world turns our vision to the imaginary Golden Age of India's past, which is supposed to hold the cure for all the evils of modern civilisation. Looking backwards in the foolish zeal of a self-arrogated mission, we ironically forget our journey forward and, as a blind-folded herd, go round and round in the vicious circle of our ideological confusion.

Even a cursory glance at the cultural background of modern Europe will convince all but the hopeless fanatics that it would not be necessary



for western civilisation to wait for the medicineman from India, were its malady really curable by the magic elixir of spiritualism. Europe could find plenty of that drug in the dusty cellars of its own past. As a matter of historical fact, the roots of all the exuberant spiritualist growth on the decaying body of the bourgeois society can all be traced to the subsoil of Christianity and of the pagan speculative thought and religious views that went into the making of the ideology of the western civilisation.

Once it is seen that India has little to offer even in the field which is supposed to be her speciality, the crusading spirit of the forces objectively making for her Renaissance will be dampened and they will begin to act according to the good old dictum: Doctor, heal thyself. What young India needs is the conviction of Hu Shih, the greatest Chinese philosopher living, who is called the father of the Chinese Renaissance, and the courage with which he expressed his conviction: "China has nothing worth preserving. If she has anything, it will preserve itself. You foreigners, who tell China that she has something worth preserving, are doing her a disservice, for you are only adding to our pride. We must make a clean sweep, and adopt western culture and outlook." Young India may also be referred to the address of Sir C. V. Raman at the Convocation of the Bombay

University in 1932,\* which contained a message immensely more valuable than the reactionary confusion and lyrical futility of all those who are woefully misleading India by the nose, away from the road of progress. The deplorable intellectual stagnation of young India is evidenced by the singular fact, that an epoch-making message of one of the greatest living Indians goes practically unnoticed, while petty platitudes and reactionary rigmaroles pronounced by demagogues, charlatans and muddle-heads are applauded as the acme of wisdom.

\* But there are a few Indians who raise their voice of reason and wisdom from time to time. Speaking at the Ravenshaw College at Cuttack in January 1934, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, Vice-Chancellor of the Lucknow University, for example, said : "Our old literature, philosophy and civilisation in general serve for serious study and appreciation, but we find many directions in which we have lost a real hold over the kernel of that civilisation and are often clinging to its mere shell. There is an aggressive kind of nationalism which considers everything worthy of retention simply because it is old. But the present state of our country is mainly due to our not having moved with the time, not having learned from the progress made by other nations. Some of the greatest evils from which the world is suffering at the present moment

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See Vol. I, "Philosophical Revolution."

are due to this intense feeling of aggressive nationalism and racialism as exemplified in the case of Germany and Italy."

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To visualise others in their greatness, measured by the standards of spiritualism, should cure the vanity of Indians, and enable them to look at the world with a reasonable desire to learn from others, and approach their own problems with a sense of realism. The doctrine of the spiritual superiority of Indian culture disregards the history of Europe from the downfall of the Greco-Roman antiquity to the sixteenth century of the Christian era, when rationalism and scientific knowledge began to dispel the depressing darkness of the Middle-Ages and claimed predominance over human thought. The life and culture of the European peoples throughout that long period were intensely spiritualistic, completely dominated by priests, lay or professional—those purveyors of spiritual power as against the temporal. It was strikingly possessed of all the features which are fondly believed by the Hindus to be their proud heritage—the special genius of their race. For more than a thousand years, since the conclusion of the period of Alexandrian learning, faith completely dominated the European mind; revealed knowledge completely eclipsed reason. The materialist philosophy of ancient Greece had been eclipsed by the meta-

physics and moral philosophy of the Athenian era ; this, in its turn, having laid down the philosophical foundation of Christian theology, was itself eclipsed by the new religion.

An acquaintance with the European history of that long period shows that the religious form of thought is not the special genius of any chosen people, but is associated with certain forms of social relations irrespective of the geographical location of peoples living under such relations. As a matter of fact, at a certain stage of his intellectual development, man can think only in terms of religion, and can express his striving for progress only in terms of a moralising mysticism. In those conditions, religion, mysticism, metaphysical speculation, become a social necessity. Every people in such a stage of social evolution must necessarily think in religious, mystic, metaphysical terms. The contents of their thought are identical ; its basic forms are analogous ; difference of geographical environment may create only superficial peculiarities. As long as ignorance prevents man from being conscious of the endless potentialities inherent in his own being, man must seek the support of a super-natural power in the hope of rising above his limitations and overcoming the obstacles to his aspirations. In proportion as the knowledge of nature and of his own self as a part of nature dissipates his ignorance, man gains con-

fidence in himself. Spiritualism ceases to be an intellectual necessity. But it subsists as a prejudice. While stubbornly resisting new forms of thought, while combatting the co-ordination of the ever increasing varieties of empirically acquired knowledge, into a rationalist and scientific philosophy, spiritualism becomes a powerful ally of reaction as against the human urge for freedom and progress. It provides the moral sanction to the vulgarest forms of materialism in practice.

In Europe, spiritualism attained such a socially reactionary and ideologically enslaving significance already in the early Middle-Ages—after Christianity had played out its revolutionary role in the history of civilisation and established itself as the powerful Catholic Church, had transformed itself into an ally of feudal barbarism. The following characterisation of the Middle-Ages by an orthodox historian shows antiquated spiritualism in its true colour. "Ferocious and sensual, that age worshipped humanity and asceticism; there has never been a purer ideal of love nor a grosser profligacy of life." (Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*).

In the history of India, the Buddhist revolution draws the dividing line between the period when the religious form of thought was a necessary intellectual phenomenon, served a positive social purpose, and the period in which spiritualism became an instrument of reaction, a bulwark

against higher civilisation. The growth of rational and *quasi* materialist systems of thought (Vaiseshik, Sankhya, Nayaya, etc.), which went into the revolutionary philosophy of Buddhism, indicated that the older form of religious thought as contained in the *Upanishads* had outlived their social utility. Their continuation as the predominating ideology meant a dark period of intellectual reaction, to which Bryce's characterisation of the European Middle-Ages is equally applicable. A critical historian would find post-Buddhist India (including the period of Buddhist decline and degeneration) just as full of incongruous contradictions as the Middle-Ages in Europe. A study of the history of India, not with the preconceived notion of vindicating her past greatness, as an apology for the present shame, not with the purpose of rewriting it to prove a thesis, but in quest of historical truth, will discover ample material showing that the spiritualist extravagances of *Mahajana* Buddhism as well as of triumphant Hinduism, as finally re-established by Sankaracharya were closely associated with the vilest material practices of life. When the patriarchal, feudal and priestly ruling classes revelled in corruption, sensualism, luxury and barbarian chivalry, sanctimonious religiosity, moralising mysticism and spiritualist philosophical doctrines were the characteristic features of the

prevailing ideology. The history of the European Middle-Ages might serve as a mirror to many who lack the courage of directly facing the ugly realities of India's past, and inspire them to cast a critical look at their own idealised background. Then, the fascinating rainbow of imagination will disappear, many bubbles of beautiful dreams will burst, freeing young India from cherished illusions, clearing its vision of the mist of preconceived notions, enabling it finally to look boldly ahead and march with determination on the road of progress, casting off the shackles of the past and the unnecessary ballasts of hoary tradition.

With a superficial knowledge of the subject (often without that), the average Hindu intellectual regards Christianity with a lofty contempt. He finds the Biblical doctrines to be crude and childish in comparison with the subtlety and what he considers to be deepness of his ancestral faith. He is amused, for example, by the doctrine of creation as contained in the Genesis, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that the Vedic cosmology, not to mention the ludicrous *Pauranic* tales, appear no less fantastic in the light of knowledge subsequently acquired by mankind. According to the *Upanishads*, the creation takes place in the following manner: In the beginning, there was the One, which wished to be many, and the world with all animate and inanimate things came into

existence ; when the time of creation comes, the absolute, unmoved, immaterial state of the Supreme Being is disturbed by the generation of consciousness (*Ahamkar*) ; the desire of the One to be many causes the disruption of the unitary primal state, and there appear in succession space (*Akash*), air, heat, water and earth.

This doctrine of creation has of late been interpreted and rationalised so as to make it appear as anticipating the most modern scientific theories. The old popular saying that what is not mentioned in the Vedas does not exist, has come to be a serious article of Hindu faith. It is claimed that the Hindu scriptures contain the maximum of human knowledge. Modern science and philosophy have nothing to say about what was not known to the inspired *Rishis*. But this practice of pouring new wine in old bottles is simply ridiculous, because the scientific view of things knows no sudden beginning of the world. It dispenses with the primitive notion of creation. There is no difference whatever between those who believe that God said "Let there be light, etc., and there was light, etc.," and those who believe that in the beginning there was One who became many simply because he wished to do so. In any case, the point of departure in either case is a super-natural will, which conjures up the Universe out of nothing. This magical power, again, can only be assumed.



It can never be known, its existence cannot be proved, since in that case it would cease to be what it is imagined to be. Then, the Hindu Scriptures contain other doctrines of creation still more incredible. For instance, the God creates the Prajapati and the Prajapati creates the original specimen of the various human and animal species as if he were a skilled potter. Further, there is the doctrine of the four castes issuing forth from the different parts of the Brahma's body.

*Prima facie*, Christianity as well as the other great monotheistic religion, namely, Islam, possesses a rather simple conception of God. The conception of a personal God is naturally simpler than the conception of God as a pure conception. This was the case in older religions which evolved, in a long process, a sort of mystic, monotheistic cult out of the background of the natural religion (Polytheism), which was not discarded but retained as the concrete form of the mystic cult, limited only to the higher priesthood. Hinduism belongs to this category, together with the religious systems of ancient Egypt and Babylon. The difference, however, does not alter the fact that all religions visualise original creation as something coming out of nothing. The best defence of this absurd notion common to all religions was put up by Christianity, which boldly set up the dogma—out of nothing arises omnipotence

—as against the old Greek rationalist dictum—out of nothing comes nothing.

No religion is really born in a particular moment of time, revealed to a particular prophet. The doctrines and dogmas of any religion crystallise themselves in a process, over a whole period of time, determined by the social conditions of the given period. In certain stages of human evolution, religion, in some form or other, is a social necessity, and as all other social phenomena, it is changeable and transitory. No religion is based upon any eternal, immutable and absolute truths. The basis of all religions being the material conditions of life, not only are their forms bound to change from time to time, but religion itself, that is, faith in some super-natural agency, becomes useless when the spiritual development of man attains a sufficiently high level. The advance of positive knowledge, as distinct from speculative thought and the so-called revealed wisdom, enables man to depend on himself. It is no longer necessary for him to seek some super-human support.

The ancient materialist philosophy of Greece indicated the way to the spiritual liberation of man. But it was limited to a small class of people; its general acceptance was impossible under the material conditions of the time. Nevertheless, it shook the foundation of the established faith—in the anthropomorphic gods of natural religion.

Moral codes based upon the old faith lost their meaning in consequence of the disruption of its foundation ; society was thrown into a state of spiritual chaos. A new religion became a historic necessity. The philosophical foundation of the new religion was laid by the rise of individualism—a product of the dissolution of the old social relations. Its doctrines and dogmas gradually crystallised as the sanction for new moral codes and social relations.

A change in the material conditions of life brings about a corresponding readjustment of ideal standards. The disruption of an established set of social relations shakes the foundation of the traditional form of faith. Man's relation to the God or gods, as the case may be, is determined by the relation amongst men themselves. Natural religion, as for example of the Vedas, or of the Greek mythology—deification of the diverse phenomena of nature as objects of worship—originally was the religion of decentralised tribal society. Monotheism—the belief in one God—rose as the ideological reflex of the striving for the political organisation of society under a centralised State. The worship of a glittering galaxy of gods, all equally powerful idealised super-human beings, was the spiritual expression of man living in the conditions of primitive democracy. The conception of a Super-God became a spiritual necessity

when monarchist States began to rise out of the ruins of tribal republics. An over-lord in Heaven is postulated as the moral sanction for the overlordship on earth.

The development of the religion of a particular group of human beings, from polytheism to monotheism, is influenced by the intensity of the social crisis which promotes it. There may be a complete break with the old form of religion and worship, the new monotheistic faith operating as a mighty lever to unhinge the decayed social structure; or the conception of one God may grow gradually out of the background of polytheism, not to repudiate it, but to stabilise its decayed structure—as an agency of compromise between the old and the new. The first process heralds a social revolution: The old priesthood is driven from the position of traditional power and privileges; spiritual leadership is assumed by laymen, often hailing from the lower strata of society. The second process takes place in the conditions of a social stagnation, being the ideological reflex of a perennial social crisis. The old social order decays, but not to the extent of throwing the multitude in a state of complete despair; therefore the urge for revolt is weak and halting. Nevertheless, the miseries of life in the midst of the conditions of social dissolution, and the ineffectiveness of the appeal to the ancestral

gods for redress, weaken the traditional faith ; the power and position of the priesthood are shaken, though not openly challenged. The ministership of discredited gods having become a social function of doubtful and diminishing importance, the priestly class looks for a new authority for its supremacy. That is found in the claimed ability to commune with some inscrutable cosmic force to which even the gods are subordinated, and the knowledge of whose mystic ways is beyond the reach of all mortals ; only the priesthood, by virtue of heredity and the practice of esoteric rites, is specially equipped for the divine role.

The vicissitudes of life are no longer ascribed to the old familiar deities, who could be propitiated by rituals and sacrifices. They are now explained as the realisation of the inscrutable cosmic purpose which operates through the mortal human beings. Thus, man is made responsible for his sorrows and sufferings. The spiritual revolt generated by the chaotic conditions of the dissolution of tribal society is nipped in the bud. The alluring but chimerical vista of a state of eternal peace and blissfulness is opened up before the victims of social chaos to divert their restless minds from the torments and incertitudes of life. The illusion of possessing an immortal soul persuades man to look upon the realities of his mortal existence as illusion.

This second type of monotheism establishes it-

self as the ideology of a social reaction. The subtlety of its form is no evidence for its spiritual superiority. It is evolved by the priesthood—the only class in the given type of society possessing sufficient leisure to develop the capacity of speculation and abstract thought ; and this capacity is no evidence of spiritual or intellectual superiority. It is the product of freedom from manual labour. When the notion is evolved by the priesthood, the Supreme Being necessarily appears as an abstract conception. Otherwise, it could not remain an esoteric cult, a mystic knowledge, a monopoly of the priestly élite.

This process of involved religious development from the polytheistic faith to a mystic cult took place in ancient India, also in Egypt and Assyria. The Vedantic monotheism—the evolution of which is to be traced in the tales of the Upanishads—was a creation of the Brahmans, and became a force for the stabilisation of society under sacerdotal supremacy. It did not replace the Vedic natural religion, which had partially lost its hold on the people under the conditions of the decay of the tribal social order. It did not appear as a revolt against the established rites and rituals. The priesthood could not advocate the abolition of a form of faith and worship which had placed it at the head of the society. Therefore, the speculation about the First Cause of things—the conception

of a self-operating cosmic force—could not become the philosophical background of a popular monotheistic faith like Christianity or Islam. It grew as a mystic cult, confined to the priestly class, and consequently reinforced the theocratic structure of society. Whatever the priesthood had lost in prestige as the ministers of the anthropomorphic gods, was more than compensated by the divine authority derived from the claim to have insight into the mysteries of the Universe. The speculative conception of a super-natural cosmic force did not depose the discredited gods of natural religion. On the contrary, the doctrine of an inscrutable divine will rehabilitated their impaired position. Their palpable failure to perform their functions, in consideration of the offerings and sacrifices of man, was explained by the law of *karma*. It inconsistently made man responsible for his own miseries, in a world believed to be subject to a divine will which knew no law but its own whim, and which could never be comprehended by the human mind. The curious combination of the doctrine of free will, as implied in the law of *karma*, with that of absolute divine dispensation, kept man tied to the rites and rituals of the old faith, while it taught him not to expect any reward for his acts of virtue.

An airy structure of a mystical monotheistic cult was thus reared upon the foundation of a

decayed natural religion, which was preserved, on the authority of the new cult, as the faith suitable for the vulgar multitude. It became a new weapon in the hands of the sacerdotal rulers of society. It fortified the shaken position of the anthropomorphic deities by placing them in a Pantheon the inner mysteries of which were accessible only to the privileged Brahmins.

Christian monotheism triumphed as the ideology of a whole period of human progress, because it rose out of a background of complete social dissolution, advocating the establishment of new social relations to be governed by revealed spiritual standards. Being the creation largely of the oppressed multitude, as the ideological expression of their striving for the betterment of social conditions, this type of monotheistic faith is based upon the simple conception of a personal God—a conception accessible to the ordinary man's mind. It is a democratic faith, which, by establishing a direct personal relation between the meanest devotee and the august ruler of the Universe, tears down the established social structure. By dispensing with the old rites and rituals, which postulate a class of intermediary between God and the ordinary worshipper, the priesthood is dislodged from the leadership of society. It is a social revolution.

Christianity originally was a standard of revolt of the masses against injustice and oppression. But



the oppressed multitude of that time was so placed socially as not to be able to feel in themselves the power to overthrow the established order of oppression and injustice, and built in its place a new one of brotherhood and equality. Therefore, the spirit of revolt was necessarily expressed in a religious form. The new social order was to be created, not by the efforts of man, but by the dispensation of an almighty God, visualised as the personification of justice, who would punish the rich evildoers and reward the virtuous poor. The idea of a Supreme Being was born of the necessity to alter the conditions of the social existence of man. Therefore, God could not be a mere conception only to be contemplated. He had to be visualised in a concrete form. He had to be endowed with all the attributes of man, only in infinitely greater proportions, so that nothing could be impossible for him to do.

The personal God of Christianity, as well as of the other two strictly monotheistic religions, namely, Judaism and Islam, was the creation of the dynamic force of social revolt and progress ; whereas the Hindu conception of the Supreme Being as a state without any attribute is the outcome of the desire to maintain the social *status quo* by discouraging all struggle for the improvement of the conditions of life.

The Christian idea of personal God was of

Jewish origin, so also was the belief in the coming of the Messiah. On the other hand, the giddy theological structure raised eventually on the simple notion of a God of Justice and his Messiah was rooted in the metaphysical digression of Greek philosophy. The fighting social-revolutionary character of early Christianity was also of the Jewish tradition, born of the struggle of an oppressed people for freedom. The so-called Christian spirit of resignation and meekness, a spirit unknown to original Christianity, was of Greek (Stoic) heritage, generated in the conditions of social dissolution. The root of that spirit could be traced in the Sophist philosophy of individualism, which represented a democratic protest against the destruction of the freedom of the City Republics by the aristocratic confederation led by Sparta.

According to the social position and cultural level of the class of people who set forth basic dogmas and doctrines of any particular religion, these may have a simple or subtle form and terminology. A learned, sophisticated, priestly caste can naturally dress up the absurdity in mystic speculative form; when a religion is the creation of the common people, the new faith is stated simply and directly, making no compromise with the old which it seeks to abolish. But in any case, the impossibility of creation out of nothing can ever be performed only by magic. The subtlety

or simplicity of the performance of the magical feat is of secondary importance. Faith, the essence of religion, is necessarily based upon magic and miracle which, in course of time, may shroud their native naivete in an intriguing veil of mysticism, or buttress the weakness of their foundation by the stout bulwark of a complicated theology.

The simplicity of the Christian faith as stated in the Bible, however, had, on the one hand, a background of the profound speculative thought of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics ; while, on the other hand, it was subsequently embellished with the most intricate theological doctrines. While the Biblical stories are not more primitive and incredible than the Vedic lores or the tales of the Upanishads, or again the fantastic legends of Hindu mythology, the philosophical foundation of the Christian faith is more profound and its theological super-structure more subtle than commonly known or conceded by the spiritualist snobbishness of the Hindu intellectuals.

The western civilisation, being even to-day largely dominated by the moral principles and spiritual standards of Christianity, cannot be charged of materialism, in the philosophical sense. Europe has been all along, and even to-day is, true to its Christian faith, just as much as India has abided by the spiritual principles of Hinduism. The spiritual principles in either case being essen-

tially identical, there is absolutely no reason to assume that they degenerated in one place, whereas in the other they retained their pristine purity. In both the cases, they degenerated necessarily, having outlived their historical usefulness. In the case of Europe, a new mode of thought developed to dispute the authority of spiritualist dogmas and to replace them as the determining factor of human life and progress. The new revolutionary philosophy steadily gained ground as the embodiment of all the positive outcome of the preceding forms of culture. In that prolonged struggle, antiquated spiritualism was forced to cast off, one after another, the deceptive trappings of philosophical forms, rationalist terminology and pseudo-scientific professions.

In India, religious ideology retained its domination of culture even after its historical usefulness had been exhausted. Not subjected to the criticism born of scientific knowledge, in India, spiritualism was not exposed in all its absurdities, nor was it forced to rationalise its forms (as modern idealist philosophy), in order to adapt itself to changing social conditions, destroying itself in the process. Consequently, it appeared to retain its pristine purity—as the special genius of Indian culture. The domination of religious ideology was the result of a prolonged period of social stagnation.

If it is true that the decaying materialist civi-

lisation of the West is appealing to India to come to its aid with the panacea of spiritualism, which she has preserved in pristine purity at the cost of several centuries of social progress, let those who thrive on the prostrate and putrid body of Indian society be proud of this disgraceful mission. The impending Renaissance of India, however, will take place, not under the leadership of the "great men" who, consciously or unconsciously, champion reaction, but in spite of their moralising mysticism and stale spiritualist dogmas. The Renaissance of India will take place under the banner of a revolutionary philosophy. Those who will not be able to rise above the spiritualist prejudice, will be thrown into oblivion by the inexorable logic of historical development, however great they may appear to be to-day.

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The religious thought of western civilisation, in the earlier days, might have been to some extent influenced by India, as it was also by the earlier culture of other eastern peoples such as the Egyptians, Jews, Assyrians, Persians and finally the Arabs. It is precisely for this reason that the modern civilisation, which developed in Europe, is the common heritage of the entire mankind, it having incorporated the positive outcome of all previous cultures. Whatever historical usefulness those earlier modes and forms of thought still possessed

for the progress of mankind further ahead (their respective world missions) went into the making of the initial stages of the modern civilisation. In the person of their common child, Christianity, they were eventually liquidated by the modern scientific thought.

The structure of the Christian religion was raised upon three imposing pillars: the monotheistic morality of the Hebrews, Hellenic speculative thought, particularly Platonic and Stoic, and oriental pantheistic mysticism. In the earlier stages, the basic factor was the Jewish ethical doctrines and the unitary conception of God. The Gospel and the Biblical texts are based mainly upon the Hebrew tradition.

Meant for the common people, the Biblical texts were couched in a popular idiom ; the ideas, often expressed quaintly, are nevertheless spiritualistic and possess a high tone of morality. While reading the biblical texts, one historical fact should be borne in mind. The Gospels were originally preached with the purpose of a revolutionary agitation—to incite the lower strata of society in a revolt against the Roman ruling classes. To serve their purpose, they had to be couched in the popular language and bear forms of expression which appealed to popular imagination. The original preachers of the Christian Gospel themselves belonged to the lower strata, and as such were of

little education, some most probably illiterate. Viewed in the light of the historical facts, the merits of the Biblical texts appear toweringly high. The founders of Christianity two thousand years ago preached Gandhism, which aspires to save the world to-day. The difference is that, at that time, their moral doctrines had a revolutionary significance, whereas to-day they are dull platitudes positively harmful as the ideological bulwark of reaction.

The Hebrew Prophets were the forerunners of Christianity as a revolutionary movement. They all thundered against the rich, lived the life of recluses, preached renunciation, praised poverty and heralded the advent of an *Avatar* to save the world. Their doctrine of the Messiah was exactly the same as the *Avatarbad* of the Gita. Amos, for example, cried in indignation: "They know not to do right who store up violence and robbery." The revolutionary significance of this moral outburst is not to be found in Gandhism—the patent medicine of Hindu culture for all maladies. The Hebrew Prophets did not condemn violence *per se*. They condemned violence because it was the means for oppressing the poor. They categorically declared that to do right—to practise moral principles like goodness, justice, etc.—was not in the nature of the upper classes, because the latter maintained themselves in power and luxury by "violence and

robbery". The spiritual culture of ancient India, on the contrary, was based frankly upon the doctrine that worldly power, pomp and greatness were of divine ordinance; "all worldly *bibhutis* are the *bibhuti* of God" (Gita). As a matter of fact, the division of society into castes, the form which the system of exploitation assumed in by-gone days, was declared to be the creation of God (Gita). The moral principles of Gandhism, that is, of the "spiritualist" Hindu culture, seek to persuade the poor, oppressed and exploited to be reconciled to their lot. That is the practical implication of the Gandhist doctrine of "suffering, sacrifice, love and voluntary poverty".

Amos also preached : "Seek good and not evil. Hate the evil and love the good." And Amos was not a solitary voice, but one of a whole succession of Hebrew Prophets, who preached equally exalted moral concepts which all went into the making of the new religion of Christianity. And the latter, in its turn, even to-day yields a powerful influence on the western society. If Christianity shook off its original revolutionary character in proportion as it was taken under protection by the upper classes, and in course of time underwent a metamorphosis in form as well as in essence, the Hindu religion and philosophy have been equally affected by history. They can no more claim to have defended their primitive purity against the powerful impact



of time than Christianity. The one as well as the other has long ago outlived its historical usefulness. Neither of them, therefore, can be of any value for the future progress of mankind.

The social and moral principles of Christianity are formulated in the Sermon on the Mount and the Revelation of St. John. In one instance, the truth came to the suffering earth from the Supreme Being through the intermediary of his incarnation; and in the other, it was revealed through a devotee. The Ten Commandments equally were reflections of the "divine truth", because they were also "revealed". The Sermon on the Mount teaches: "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the persecuted. Blessed are the pure in heart. Resist not evil. Love thy enemies. Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven. Lay not up treasures upon earth. You cannot serve God and Mammon." One must be more than a blind fanatic to claim that Hindu culture was ever actuated by any higher ideal of morality, sacrifice, suffering, renunciation and belief in the life after. Why should the western world pine for the stale platitudes of Gandhism when any modest Christian clergyman can utter equally high-sounding moral precepts with no inferior spiritual authority?

If Christianity could not save the accursed West, Gandhism obviously stands no greater chance. If the moralising mysticism of Christi-

anity could not spiritualise the vulgar materialism of the barbarous Middle-Ages as well as of the capitalist modern civilisation, similar doctrines preached by Gandhi can logically be no more effective for the purpose. If Christian piety and other worldliness could not keep European society away from the "corrupting" influence of scientific knowledge, the "spiritual" message of India cannot do the impossible. If Christianity, with its subtle theology and its really imposing superstructure of an idealist philosophy, failed in the historic fight against the progressive spiritual liberation of man, no more glorious a fate awaits Hinduism, with its Vedanta philosophy interpreted however eclectically by the prophets of India's spiritual mission to mean anything, including the very latest theories of science, even those of the future. As a matter of fact, the defeat of Christianity and the debacle of western idealist philosophy historically signify the failure of spiritualism as a world force. The western idealist philosophy, in its pantheistic culmination (Spinoza and Hegel), does not leave anything for the Vedanta to add. Having attained its climax, it was liquidated by its own internal logic, all its positive elements being absorbed by the philosophy of materialism. Therefore, ancient Hindu culture has already contributed its quota to the common heritage of humanity—the philosophy of a new civilisation. What is

pompously paraded now as "India's message to the world" is a dry shell discarded by history. To rattle this dead skeleton, disregarding the fact that the soul lives as an inseparable part of the collective creation of the entire human history, indicates the inability to appreciate the real value of the culture of ancient India. The noisy defenders of India's culture are singularly incapable of appreciating their charge, and consequently insult it by their reactionary glorification of it.

The exclamation : "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he loses his own soul" contains the gist of the Christian Gospel. The salvation of the soul is not only the highest ideal, but the only concern of life. A religion based on such a principle is not to be dismissed as crude and childish. On this showing, it measures itself up equally, if indeed not favourably, with the *Sanatan Dharma*, in its purest form. Christianity is the only religion which has been subjected to a critical examination from all sides. Its history has been diligently investigated, and freed from legends and falsifications. Its doctrines have been critically analysed to give out their social meaning. The outcome of such an all-round criticism is historical truth—"Christianity distinguishes itself from other religions in that no other religion gives so much importance to the salvation of mankind. Salvation is not earthly

temporal happiness or well-being. The Christian holds that earthly happiness draws man away from God, whereas misfortune, suffering leads man back to God." (Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*).

The profoundest critic of Christianity, Feurbach, cannot be suspected of exaggeration. Besides, he revealed the social causes of this distinguishing feature of Christianity. It was not the mysterious result of the special genius of any individual or race. It was the outcome of certain specific social conditions which would produce analogous effects wherever they obtained. Should any indignant Indian patriot maintain that the statement betrays Feurbach's ignorance of Hinduism, we need not enter into an argument, but simply retort that, granted the charge of ignorance, theoretically, Feurbach's statement remains unshaken. If Hinduism or Buddhism for that matter, possessed the distinguishing features equally or even to a greater extent, that would not prove any special genius or racial superiority. It would simply prove that the social conditions which placed the distinguishing mark on Christianity obtained also in India, perhaps in an acuter form.

An intense aversion to the enjoyments of life, and consequently renunciation of everything earthly was the highest Christian virtue. This was carried to the extent of an utter disregard even for the bare

necessities of life. Such a state of mind was the result of the conviction that spiritual existence was the real existence, which was obscured by the material being of man. To rise above the bondage of material being was, therefore, the condition for the return to the consciousness of spiritual reality—the highest ideal of life.

"The ascetic" Christians, as distinguished from the "vulgar" renounced all the pleasures of life and duties of society. They practised chastity—no marriage was allowed. Natural inclinations of the body as well as of the mind were condemned as vice. Thousands and thousands ascetics fled from a profane and degenerate world to perpetual solitude or religious society. They resigned the use and the property of their temporal possessions. They soon acquired the respect of the world which they despised. And the loudest appalause was bestowed upon their divine philosophy which surpassed, without the aid of science or reason, the laborious virtues of the Greek schools." (Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

Christianity inherited this negative attitude towards worldly life from the Hebrew Prophets as well as from the Cynic and Stoic philosophers of Greece. The Jewish Prophets, who heralded the advent of the Messiah, were all ascetics. They shunned the world as futile and transitory ; con-

demned its vices and allurements. Christianity was immediately preceded by a numerous Jewish sect, the Essenians, which adopted the creed of renunciation and asceticism. Those virtuous fore-runners of Christianity preached the doctrines of goodness, godliness and righteousness. Their guiding principles were love of God, of virtue and humanity.

The basic doctrine of the Cynics was : "Enjoyment is unworthy of men ; there are higher and purer things for men to seek." They preached complete renunciation of earthly things, and subjugation of all sensual desires, which were declared to be the impediment to pure happiness. The founder of this school, Antithenes, cried passionately : "I would rather go mad than be a slave of the senses". The history of the world has scarcely seen any parallel to the Cynics in respect of the contempt for sensual enjoyment. The most famous representative of the school, Diogenes, held that the condition of pure life was annihilation of the Body ; the nearer one approached that perfect mortification, the closer he was to the ideal of perfect virtue. The body was looked upon as something vile, filthy, degraded and degrading.

The Stoics also despised worldly life, and lived with the hope of a mysterious better existence. According to their philosophy, the badge of a wise man was contempt for earthly fortune, pain and

death. All the enjoyments of this world are empty and vain. Happiness is to be found not in enjoyment, but in virtue. The Stoics were equally indifferent to the good as well as to the evil of this world. The preparation for the other life is more worthwhile than the well-being of this worldly existence. These doctrines were very widespread throughout the Roman Empire in the first centuries of the Christian era. They not only affected the masses, destitute and pauperised by the collapse of the antique social order. The spirit of renunciation—disdain for this world—penetrated even the upper classes. Intellectual leaders of the period like Sallust, Horace, Virgil, the Senecas, were all ardent Stoics.

Inspired by those teachings and examples, the Christians went further than their pagan predecessors. "The votaries of divine philosophy aspired to initiate a purer and more perfect model. They trod in the footsteps of the Prophets who had retired to the desert, and they resorted to the devout and contemplative life." (Gibbon). The Christian world was swayed by this intense spirit of renunciation throughout the Middle-Ages.

The Hindu cult of *Sanyas* does not go any further, and *Varnashram Dharma* lags far behind; for, according to the latter, man is to retire from the worldly life after having enjoyed it, only when his faculties of enjoyment were dulled. Christi-

anity would make no compromise with the well-being of earthly life, and looked upon it as the decisive obstacle to the salvation of the soul. Christ, for example, exclaimed when a repentent rich man failed to comply with the injunction to give up his riches and take the beggar's bowl: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" To say that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God," is to hold that worldly well-being is utterly incompatible with the ideals of a return to spiritual consciousness. So, if it were a question of curing the disease of vulgar materialism, the West could find the remedy in its own religion. It need not wait for the "message of the spiritual East", particularly in view of the fact that the pretentious doctor has not been able to protect himself any better. Instead of listening to Gandhi's injunction to ply the holy wheel as the panacea of all its disorders, or receiving from the modern Swamis and perambulating prophets the watery portion of a hackneyed mysticism, the western ruling class could, if they would, with immensely greater benefit follow their own Prophet. For, Christ thundered: "Go now, ye rich men, to weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered; and the rest



of them shall be witness against you. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your heart as in a day of slaughter; you have denounced and killed the just." Vulgar materialism could not be denounced any more scathingly.

St. John, the divine light having been revealed in him, predicted the destruction of Rome, the oppressor of mankind, for riches, power and vanity. He preached: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the best thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (Epistle).

Evidently, the Christian West has no need to turn to a Gandhi for learning the quaint cult of voluntary poverty; nor is the reactionary utopia of teaching the rich to be noble and righteous—of spiritualising the right of property—a monopoly of India's special genius.

Speaking in the Franciscan Study Circle during his last visit to London (September 1931), Gandhi said: "The justification for voluntary poverty is that wealth for all is impossible, but all can share in non-possession. And the less one possesses, the less one desires. Great national economic problems can be more easily solved if those who have wealth, are willing to adopt voluntary

poverty." Apart from the sinister social significance of the cult of voluntary poverty, it is like carrying coal to Newcastle. Gandhi's message was but a feeble echo of a doctrine preached from the very dawn of western civilisation. The founder of the Christian sect in the meeting of which Gandhi's message was delivered had gone down in history as the classical personification of the cult of poverty. Then, there are other great figures of the Christian Middle-Ages. St. Augustin, for example, held : "Private property is not an evil in itself, but evil lay in the passionate chase after riches, the accumulation of property, the elevation of material possession over truth, justice, wisdom, faith, love of God and man, or even placing property on the same level as the ideal values." St. Thomas Aquinas also taught : "It is incumbent upon the rich, according to the divine natural law, to give generous alms to the poor, for the superfluity of one signifies the deficiency of the other."

Finally, at the fountain-head of all these currents of Christian thought, are the teachings of Plato, who proclaimed : "The community which has neither poverty nor riches will always have the noblest privileges ; in it, there is no insult or injustice, nor are again any contentions or envyings. And therefore they are good, and also because they are what is called the simple-minded." Again : "I can never assent to the doctrine that

the rich man will be happy. A man who spends on noble objects and acquires wealth by just means only, can be hardly remarkable for riches, more than he could be very poor. The very rich are not good." Taking his cue from the master, Aristotle also held: "It is not possession, but the desire of mankind which requires to be equalised."

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Speculating about the "self-existing, necessary First Cause of the Universe", the genius of Plato had conceived of a unitary divine essence—an impersonal God. But the problem how the diverse physical phenomena of nature could come out of the simple unity of the divine essence, puzzled and baffled him. How could a purely incorporeal being execute the perfect scheme of the Universe? Of course, Plato had conceived the universal scheme as of ideas, which were models, or moulds for material things. The variety of ideal models could conceivably have a common origin—the Universal Idea. Individual souls could lose themselves in the Universals Soul. But even then the problem was not solved. How could the basic unitary being diversify itself without losing its simplicity and unity, that is, ceasing to be itself? In order to be what it was conceived to be, the divine essence must be simple, immutable and eternal. The process of diversification would mean negation of the essential nature of its be-

ing. On the other hand, individual ideal models could not be of divine spiritual nature unless they were actual diversifications of the Universal Idea—the self-existing First Cause. Plato found a way out of the difficulty in the conception of the Triad. But the problem was not solved. It was simply evaded. Because, as Gibbon remarks, it was “a difficulty which must ever defy the possibilities of human mind.”

The Platonic doctrine of Triad constituted the philosophical foundation of the Trinity of Christian theology. The rationalist tradition of the ancient Greek philosophy (Ionian and Doric schools) did not permit Plato to deny outright the material existence of nature. Nevertheless, an impermissible dualism threatened to viciate his philosophy. He made it disappear in his speculative conception of an unbreakable connection between the divine essence and the phenomenal world. Thus, Platonic philosophy subsequently enabled Christian theology to dissolve the Jewish God into an impersonal, incorporeal being, without throwing away the Mosaic doctrine of creation, that is, without liquidating Christianity as a religion. The dualism of the Platonic speculation rationalised the absurdity of the creation out of nothing, without depriving the Christian God of his godliness—omnipotence and absolute freedom. Matter exists, but it cannot become anything tangible except by

fitting into the ideal model. These models being diversifications of the Universal Divine Essence, nature cannot have an existence independent of that essence. Conceive the divine essence as a personal God, and the world is explained as his creation out of a substance that really does not exist unless the God is there to create the world. The pure spirituality of the divine essence is never contaminated by any contact with matter ; matter appears as the physical world by fitting itself into the mould of the Universal Idea. Thus, no desire to create is attributed to God ; but on the other hand, matter having no real being, except in the ideal mould, the divine essence remains the cause of the world. The God creates without being in any way affected or influenced by his creation. God is the cause of the material Universe ; but the root substance of this latter is not in God who is a purely spiritual being.

The subtlety of the idea of the origin of things is thus not an Indian monopoly. Platonic speculations on this question were subtle to the extreme limit ; they were too subtle for the comprehension of all but the elite prepared for the purpose. And those subtleties all went into the making of the Christian theology and the religious philosophy of mediæval Europe.

So very highly esoteric was the Platonic doctrine of divinity that it remained confined to the

innermost circle of the Academy—a matter of profound contemplation, which elevated state of abstraction could be reached after thirty years of special preparation and training. The Christian conception of divinity as well as the mystic-metaphysical principles of western idealism are thus found to have originated in environments very similar to the *ashrams* of the Vedic Rishis—that cradle of Hindu speculative thought. *Brahmajnan* was not attainable by anybody ; it was the object of earnest *sadhana* and rigorous *tapashya*.

Having translated into Latin Plato's *Timaeus*, which contains his speculations about the Divine First Cause, Cicero confessed that he could never comprehend the doctrine, so bafflingly subtle was the concept of God of the Christian theology. The force of Cicero's confession is fully appreciated when it is recalled that not only he was one of the greatest intellects of the age, but as a Stoic he was predisposed towards the Christian conception of God—Jewish monotheism mystified by Hellenic speculation. When the mind of man is to be diverted from the realities of life, and focussed upon a divine postulate, whether in the East or in the West, the postulate must be placed behind thick veils of mystification, so as to hide its absurdity. The less comprehensible it is, the more fascinating it appears to be, and the more effectively does it perform its duty.

To fill up the unbridgeable gulf between the material Universe and its spiritual First Cause, Plato conceived the divine essence as subject to threefold manifestation—the First Cause, the Logos (or reason) and the Universal Soul. The Platonic Triad is closer to the Hindu *trimurti* in that it conceived the three entities as three Gods, united in the mysterious source of their common generation—the divine essence. The Logos, which eventually became the Son of the Christian Trinity, corresponds to the *Hiranyagarva* or *Ishwar* of Hindu theology. He has a mysterious sort of spiritual corporeality, so that he can create and govern the Universe. Not to come too close to matter, the Logos presumably creates the ideal or spiritual models, which in their totality constitute the Universal Soul. The ordinary mind cannot see how the fatal gulf between spirit and matter is bridged by this mystic and mythical hierarchy. Precisely for this reason, Platonic theology remained an esoteric cult confined to the élite of the Academy. The gulf can be ignored only by faith, which wafts one across it. But the magic could not be performed in the rationalist atmosphere of Athens. On the fall of Greece, the seat of Hellenic learning moved across the Mediterranean to Alexandria. There, Platonic theology came into contact with Gnosticism, that colourful product of oriental mystic cults. The Jewish philosopher Philo elaborated

the basic doctrines of Christian theology out of the mystic speculations of Plato. He lived a hundred years before Jesus. Logos assumed a human form so as to perform the functions incompatible with the nature and attributes of the spiritual being of the First Cause ; and to convince man of the reality of its being, the Logos was made to appear visibly on earth as the Son of God. It was not an echo of the Hindu *avatarbad* formulated in the Gita, which was composed four hundred years later.

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The existence of God cannot be established until and unless faith replaces reason ; primitive cosmology is based upon speculative deductions from a postulate, instead of inductions from the observations of nature. Contrary to current belief, the primitive man's mind knows no teleology. Magic represents the primitive conception of causality. In the process of the intellectual development of man, it precedes *animism* which is the lowest stage of spiritualism. The idea of soul and of super-natural forces develops at a much later period. This sequence in the process of the evolution of human thought has been established by extensive researches and observations of the customs and habits of savage races. The fact, in short, is that man is rather a rational than a believing being. Therefore, no religion can be firmly estab-



lished as the prevalent form of ideology of a given period except on the strength of an imposture. A prophet or a divinely inspired apostle can alone bear convincing testimony to the existence of a super-natural power which transcends the law of causality, and thereby induce man to abandon his native allegiance to reason in favour of faith.

The mystical theology of Plato, originally incomprehensible because of its precarious attachment to rationalism, nevertheless prepared the way for the imposture. St. John *post factum* proved the divinity of the legendary person of Christ with the help of Platonic theology as expounded by Philo. With the early Christians, Jesus was the Messiah heralded by the Jewish Prophets. But the frankly revolutionary significance of the moralising mysticism of the early Christians was repulsive to the orthodox Jews. They would not recognise the divinity of a rebel sentenced to death for inciting the poor against the rich, the oppressed against the oppressor. Disowned by his own people, for whom he had sacrificed his life, the repudiated Messiah had to find adherents among the gentles.

Social chaos had created among the masses of the Hellenic world a predisposition for receiving a Saviour. But with them the crude dogma of the Hebrew Prophets would not carry conviction. So, the Jewish doctrine of Messiah was rationalised

with the help of Platonic theology; and the Messiah took up the Greek epithet of Christ—"the Saviour". The basic dogma of Christian revelation formulated by the apostle John is that Jesus was the incarnation of the Logos who is always with God, being himself God, in essence, who makes all things and from whom all things are made. Thus, the Christian doctrine of Trinity was reared upon the mystic theology of Plato. Rationalist anxiety to visualise a unity of being had compelled Plato to identify matter with spirit, although the same scruple did not permit him to deny the existence of matter out-right. That paradox contained the germ of pantheism which passed on to fructify in Christian theology, and made it hardly distinguishable from the Hindu theology of the Upanishads and Vedanta. Finally, the pantheist element inherent in it overwhelmed the conditional dualism, that is, the religious substance of Christian theology, and pulled down its imposing structure.

Pantheism, which is supposed to be the special feature of Indian philosophy, is the negation of religion, being materialism standing on its head. So long as it remains in that paradoxical posture, everything naturally appears to it as upside down. As soon as it is placed in a normal position, it ceases to be itself. The highest consummation of pantheism is its self-destruction. That is the long

belated fate awaiting Vedantism. Its dream of world mission will be realised in its self-consummation.

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The eagerness to penetrate the mystery of the Platonic Triad gave birth to a vast body of speculative thought, characterised by dogmatism as well as by extreme subtlety. The doctrine of Logos assumed, the baffling problem of creation disappeared. Christianity was freed from the biblical cosmology inherited from the Jews, which was too naive and irrational to be accepted in the sophisticated rationalist atmosphere of the Hellenic world. The personal God of Israel became an impersonal deity—an imaginary object of endless speculation. But the problem re-appeared in a new form. What is the relation between the impersonal First Principle and the Logos? Were the two identical? That could not be admitted, because then either the Logos could not be the creator and the governor of the world, or the impersonality of the First Principle would be affected. Were they then different? That also could not be assumed, for in that case the Logos would be deprived of divinity. These questions regarding the nature of the Supreme Being and the mode of its operation opened up a fertile field of speculation. The result was a system of mystic theology in no way

inferior to its Indian prototype—either in form or in content.

The extreme abstractness of the object of that speculation is evidenced by the candid confession of the great Athanasius. "Whenever he forced his understanding to meditate upon the divinity of the Logos, the toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves ; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended, and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of explaining his thought. In every stage we are compelled to feel and acknowledge the immeasurable disproportion between the size of the object and the capacity of human mind." (Gibbon). Obviously, at the time of Athanasius, three-hundred years after its birth, Christianity was far far away from the simple, purely religious, ideas preached to the fishing folk of Judea. It had outgrown its concern for worldly things, and was soaring higher and higher in search of a purely spiritual existence. It had given up its original mission of establishing the kingdom of Heaven on earth, of establishing new human relations to be governed by spiritual standards. It had dissolved the Kingdom of Heaven into an immaterial abstraction. Turning back upon its original revolutionary mission, which was essentially mundane, it had flown up to the high altitude of pure spiritualism, and had thus qualified itself to

be established as the State Religion of the Roman Empire.

The metaphysical speculations of Plato had been adulterated with oriental mysticism before it went into the making of Christian theology. The mysterious doctrine of the Logos had not found much favour in the rationalist atmosphere of Athens, even in the days of its intellectual decline. After the fall of Athens, the centre of Hellenic culture and learning moved across the Levant to Alexandria. There, the divine doctrines of Plato thrived luxuriantly in the new atmosphere charged with oriental mysticism.

In the century preceding the rise of Christianity, a mystic cult called Gnosticism spread far and wide throughout the Levantine countries. It was also pantheistic. It conceived God as the root cause of everything which pervades the phenomenal world. The divine root cause was the source of light which shone in the world as Goodness and Love. The farther the rays of that divine light went from the source, the less became their brightness and purity. This process was divided into stages which were called aeons. The more distant aeons were less divine and more hylic (material). From these grew the phenomenal world. In other words, matter exists from the beginning of time as the antithesis of spirit. The material world is not created by God directly.

The creative will—demiurgus—appears in the outer æons. Thus, the world is created not directly by God, but by a subsidiary force emanating from the divine root cause which pervades everything. The creative will is a spiritual force, but it becomes less godly in proportion to the distance that separates it from its pure origin. Consequently, in the world there is brightness as well as darkness, good as well as evil. The opposing forces are perpetual. The object of life is to make brightness dispel darkness, to have the good in man triumph over the evil. Pure brightness and goodness are identical with God. They are inherent in everybody. The realisation of the God in man is the object of life.

The birthplace of Gnosticism was the cradle of the antique civilisations. The collapse of the splendourous and mighty empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, created an atmosphere charged with despair and pessimism. Mysticism grew as the ideological reflex of that insurmountable social crisis. The natural desire to escape the miseries of life, lived by the great masses of people in the dismal conditions of a social chaos, makes man come more under the temptation of a higher level of existence, above the insurmountable difficulties of this world. A glittering hallucination consoles man in the midst of the sordid realities of life. Worldly happiness having become impossible and unattainable, the striving for it is given up. The

attainment of a better life which will be unaffected by earthly cares and worries becomes the new ideal. But the earthly life is still there to be lived. The hallucination of the eternal bliss of the spiritual existence does not turn the sordid realities into nothingness. They are now regarded with indifference, as necessary evils which must be lived through preparatory to attainment of the emancipation from them.

In such an atmosphere, philosophy forgets its native function—the quest for the knowledge of nature. It becomes indifferent to realities, and wanders into the imaginary region of extra-physical existence. Fantasy runs wild. Specious doctrines are preached about the mysteries of the spiritual being. Subtle theories about the nature of the mysterious force are spun out of imagination. But eventually, a difficult problem has to be faced. How could the philosopher convince his disciples of the reality of the spiritual existence. How could he prove that his views about it are correct? By its very nature, as described by its apostles, by the admission of those who testify to its reality, the spiritual being is beyond the reach of senses; it is not to be conceived by human mind. How is it then to be proved that the whole thing is not a mere figment of imagination? The way out of the dilemma is found in the doctrine of revelation. The solution, however, is a swindle. It is

held that none can return from the realm of the pure spirit. Yet, the experience of prophets and seers is advanced as the testimony to the reality of the spiritual being. The spiritual being, established by such obviously questionable method, necessarily requires an impenetrable veil of mystery. To know the unknowable, to experience the imperceptable, to realise the unrealisable—that is the greatest mystery. That supreme magic is performed through mysticism.

The Gnostics held that the forces of evil could be over-come. Spirit and matter, light and darkness, good and evil, exist and struggle eternally. In course of the struggle, the spirit is over-shadowed by its antithesis—matter, darkness, evil—and this latter, appears to be a sovereign force. Therefore, in order to return to the purity of the spiritual being, one must flee from the earthly things, and seek refuge in renunciation and asceticism. This pessimistic and defeatist view of life grew out of the spiritual confusion produced by the collapse of the antique culture.

Analogous ideas are created by similar social conditions. The decay of the antique society of the Vedic age produced a cultural crisis also in India, out of which grew the pessimistic view of life, which is proudly proclaimed as the spiritual genius of India. But history teaches us that this specific form of thought, determined by the con-



ditions of a severe social crisis, is not an Indian monopoly. As a matter of fact, it marks the exhaustion of a flourishing era which did not germinate in its decayed organism the incentive for a further progress.

Plato's theology, promiscuously mixed with the pantheistic doctrine of the Gnostics, produced the extravagant and extremely colourful cult of neo-Platonism which was incorporated in Christian theology. The Platonic doctrine of Logos was too abstract to lend itself directly to the belief in a divine incarnation. Yet, without this contrivance of spiritual swindle, no tangible connection could be established between the absolute First Cause and the phenomenal world. The fatal gulf was eventually bridged by the neo-Platonists. About a hundred years before the obscure rebel leader of Judea died on the cross, to be immortalised as the incarnation of God, the Alexandrian philosopher Philo had transformed the metaphysical category of Logos into the Son of God, who descends upon this mortal earth in a finite human form to perform deeds which cannot be attributed to the spiritual Universal Cause. This *avatarbad*, expounded by the founder of neo-Platonism, was the central pivot of Christian theology. The basic doctrine of the philosophy of Gita runs through the entire fabric of Christian mysticism, theology and religious philosophy. Until the six-

teenth century, that spiritualist doctrine completely dominated all the currents of western thought.

A few quotations from Philo and his followers will show the striking similarity between the basic ideas of Christian mysticism and the Hindu spiritualist philosophy.

"If human knowledge is an illusion, we must seek for truth in some higher sphere. The senses may deceive ; reason may be powerless ; but there is still another faculty in man—there is Faith. Real knowledge is the gift of God, its name is faith ; its origin is the goodness of God." (Philo).

The father of Christian mysticism, which differs so very little from Hindu philosophy, was intellectually honest. He had the courage to think out his thoughts to their logical conclusion. He did not resort to the subterfuge of inventing a half-way house between knowledge and faith. He saw quite clearly that, as soon as sense perceptions were rejected, all effort to explain the world must be abandoned. Mysticism is predicated on the inexplicability of the world. The inability to explain the world or the refusal to be guided by sense perceptions, as the reflex of objective truth, necessarily leads to the notion of a mysterious cause of things. Mysticism thus is inseparable from faith ; and the faith in a mystic Supreme Being, no matter in whatever form it is conceived, is the decisive check

upon a rationalist investigation into the causes of natural phenomena. Mysticism, therefore, is an enemy of science as well as of philosophy in the strict sense.

Philo's mysticism was so pure that it openly declared its identity with faith. His conception of God was just the same as the Hindu idea of Brahma. But his spiritualism was purer. He did not tinker with the pure immateriality of the Supreme Being by the illogical, irreverent and quasi-spiritualist view that human mind can comprehend it otherwise than in faith. There was nothing mystic in the logic of Philo's mysticism. "God is incomprehensible ; his existence may be known, but his nature can never be comprehended. The nature of God is incomprehensible because he is one, simple, perfect, immutable, without any attribute. But to know this about God is not to know in what his perfection consists. We can never penetrate the mystery of his existence ; we can only believe."

An admirably straight-forward statement of the mystic view of things. But it does not satisfy the incorrigible sceptic who would ask : If sense knowledge is deceptive, if reason cannot be relied upon, how can we accept as the final standard a God whose existence is assumed in faith, and whose nature must always remain beyond comprehension ?

Plotinus, a disciple of Philo, boldly took the hurdle. He met the Sceptics' objection by emancipating mysticism from all logical scruples. Like a typical Hindu sage, the Christian mystic declared: "The God can be perceived in ecstasy, that is, through the complete forgetfulness of the individual existence." The vain effort to place faith on a foundation of reality raises delusion to the dignity of truth. Perception presupposes a consciousness which perceives. "The complete forgetfulness of the individual existence" means, if it means anything, the disappearance of individual consciousness. That may be the state of ecstasy. But whatever it may be, perception is not possible in that state. The "experience" in that sublime state of beatitude is a delusion. Mysticism must fall back upon this contrivance of self-deception or downright charlatanery in order to do the impossible. The magic that mysticism claims to perform is graphically described by Plotinus:

"I am a finite being ; but how can I comprehend the Infinite ? As soon as I do so, I am infinite myself ; that is to say, I am no longer myself, no longer that finite being having a consciousness of its own. If I attain to a knowledge of the Infinite, it is not by my reason which is finite. The Finite, as finite, can never know the Infinite. To attempt to know the Infinite through reason is futile ; it can be known only by immediate pre-

sence—ecstasy. In ecstasy, the soul becomes loosened from its material prison, separated from individual consciousness, and becomes absorbed in the Infinite Intelligence, from which it emanates. In ecstasy, it contemplates real existence, it identifies itself with that which it contemplates.” (Lewis, *History of Philosophy*).

The Finite, naturally, can never know the Infinite. Yet, it does know, and that is the magic of mysticism. Knowledge presupposes a knowing subject. But disappearance of the knowing subject is the condition for the knowledge of the Infinite. How can there be knowledge without a knower? But such petty questions do not disturb the spiritual calm of the mystic. He experiences God from “immediate presence.” In ecstasy, he contemplates God. So, even in that state, duality is not abolished. Consequently, the impassable gulf between the Finite and the Infinite is still there. But we are told that in ecstasy the soul is absorbed in the Infinite Intelligence, the contemplator identified with the contemplated. This contradictory description of the state of ecstasy does not improve the situation. If persistence of duality makes knowledge impossible, owing to the unbridgeable gulf between the Finite and the Infinite, the disappearance of the subject makes knowledge equally out of question. Thus, ecstasy is exposed to a mere figment of imagination.

Each would-be seer can choose his desert according to his taste. The phantoms seen in delirium may be real for the diseased. But they have no reality for the normal. Even for the diseased, they must disappear as soon as they regain their senses. Besides, ecstasy being an imaginary state, or a product of nervous disorder, visions seen in that state are mere illusions.

The existence of the unknowable, incomprehensible, is proved by transferring faith from God to the godly man. God exists on the testimony of dreamers or charlatans. The reliability of this palpably incredible testimony is to be taken for granted. God is no longer the object of faith. The mystic takes his place. Mysticism thus liquidates religion. Yet, it is the logical outcome of the religious mode of thought.

Christian mysticism, as expounded by Plotinus, fully coincides with the orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy. The absurdities and internal contradictions are common to both. The similarity is further proved by the following quotation :

“God in his absolute state is neither existence, nor thought, neither moved nor mutable ; he is the simple unity. Although dialectics raise us to some conviction of the existence of God, we cannot speak of his nature otherwise than negatively. We are forced to admit his existence. To say that he is superior to existence and thought, is

not to define him. It is only to distinguish him from what he is not. What he is, we cannot know. It would be ridiculous to endeavour to comprehend him."

Christianity also believes in *atmadarshan* as the only way to true knowledge. It also rejects scientific knowledge as imperfect and unreliable. It also places introspective speculation above empirical investigation or rationalist thought as the key to truth. Another neo-Platonist prophet preached :

"Know thyself that you may know from which source you are derived. Know the divinity that is within you so that you may know the divine one of which your soul is but a ray. Know your own mind and you will have the key to all knowledge. The science that descends into the soul from above is more perfect than any science obtained by investigation ; that which is excited in us by other men is far less perfect. The science which descends from above fills the soul with the influence of the Higher Cause. (Proclus).

Until three-hundred years ago, western philosophy grew under the shadow of this spiritualist tradition. Even to-day Christianity is a living force with the large mass of the western people. The modern idealist philosophy is a mere rationalisation of Christian spiritualism. Contemporary mysticism, thriving in the atmosphere of a cultural

crisis, is also inspired by Christian traditions. But the western world of to-day is entirely different from what it was when Christianity rose out of the ruins of the ancient society. Powerful forces are in operation to overcome the present social crisis. Science has destroyed the foundation of mysticism. Therefore, contemporary mysticism in Europe appears to be an exotic phenomenon in the midst of a rationalist world. But it is not a message from the East ; its roots are struck deep in the history of the western culture.

The high-brow Hindu intellectual sneers at the Christian conception of a personal God, although the poly-pantheistic hotch-potch of his own religion gives him little reason to do so. The idea of a personal God is the very essence of religion, and monotheism is the highest form of religion. The doctrine of creation out of nothing is an essential element of religious thought. It is set forth in the Bible in the most logical as well as orthodox form. The fullest play is given to the notion of omnipotence. There is no attempt to allow reason to tamper with it. The very notion being absurd, its absurdity must be manifest in its practical expression, unless its pristine purity was adulterated ; and then, the faithful would be so much less religious because of the imperfectness of their faith in the basic dogma of religion.

Miracle-mongering is another feature of



Christianity which is usually laughed at by the advocates of a "scientific religion", and Hinduism is dogmatically claimed to be the only religion which possesses that distinction. If this claim had any basis of historical reality, then the distinction would mean the extinction of Hinduism as a religion. Because, science and faith are mutually exclusive, and there can be no religion without a faith. The fantastic claim, however, is utterly unfounded, advanced by irreligious spiritualists—that queer breed of modern intellectuals who pompously deride scientific knowledge while possessing no faith, who hover blindly in the twilight of the borderland of darkness and light.

Miracle-mongering is the practical expression of the faith in God, in God as God the Almighty. Since the world is the creation of an almighty power, not bound by the laws of nature, anything can happen anywhere. This belief is the breath of religion. Untrammelled by the zeal of re-writing history to fit it into preconceived notions, anybody could see that every Hindu even to-day believes in miracles. Otherwise, the face of Mother India would have been unrecognisably changed long ago.

The stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata are full of miracles. The epic heroes are miracles personified. Not only do the Hindu masses implicitly believe in these stories, it being sinful to doubt

their truthfulness ; even the modern intellectual ardently defends the theory of an ancient glory on the evidence of "historical facts" contained in the epics. The miraculous actions and movements of the epic heroes are pointed out as indisputable evidence in support of the utterly unhistorical contention that several thousand years ago India reached a level of scientific and technological development, not yet attained by the modern civilisation. In the utter absence of social conditions which are requisite for any advance in that direction, the supposed, rather imagined, scientific and technological attainments would be possible only as a miracle. The faith in the super-natural powers of the Yogi is a faith in miracles. There are few even among the modern educated Indians who would not look upon the usual feats of any ordinary magician as evidence invalidating scientific theories ; who would not find the hand of God in any natural phenomenon which cannot be as yet explained. As regards the masses of the Hindu population, even to-day their faith in miracles is as implicit as it was with the Christians hundreds of years ago. For example, overtaken by an epidemic, the vast bulk of the rural population would much rather seek relief in some sort of religious ceremony than rely upon the curative value of medicine and other hygienic agencies. The super-natural power of Sadhus and Sanyasis is a matter

of general belief. Gandhi's phenomenal popularity among the masses is only to a very small extent due to an awakening of political consciousness. It is mostly due to a widespread belief in his power to do what ordinary mortals cannot, that is to say, in his power to do miracles. The belief in miracles is the result of a lack of self-confidence. Had the modern Indians been less addicted to the faith in miracles than the earlier mediæval Christians, they should have shown greater ability to change their dismal position.

If one did not stand firmly and unconditionally by the belief that God created the world somehow, by virtue of his omnipotence, out of nothing, without any material substance ; if one did not implicitly believe, as the corollary to this faith, in the almightiness of God, in all sorts of magic and miracles ; then, there would arise inevitably the fatal question : How did God create the world ? —a question which at once transcends the boundary of religion and leads sooner or later, directly or indirectly, to naturalism, atheism and materialism, that is, to real philosophy.

Provoked by the germs of doubt imbedded in the mystical speculation of the Upanishads, the earlier systems of Indian philosophy (Vaisheshik, Sankhya and Nyaya) tried to answer the dangerous question, though without having raised it explicitly. The result was Buddhist atheism, for the

suppression of which disruptive doctrine all the heavy artillery of Vedic Fundamentalism had to be brought into action. Sankaracharya himself found that his interpretation of the Vedanta Sutras could not serve the purpose of combatting Buddhism and the semi-materialist systems of philosophy that had gone into its making, except by contradicting itself by the postulation of a personal God. Otherwise, even the hallucination of the world could not be explained within the limits of religious thought. Indeed, the pantheism of Vedanta itself, carried to its logical conclusion, leads to materialism, as any system of absolute idealism must. Sankaracharya evaded that logical consequence of his system by the inglorious return to the anthropomorphic concept of God, the retreat being covered by a mass of sophistry and hopeless confusion—all serving the one purpose of self-deception.

Christianity also headed towards the slippery path of idealist philosophy as soon as it left the strictly religious ground to wander into theology. But to begin with, it was a phenomenon of pure spiritualism, owing to its uncompromising conception of a personal God and firm attachment to the virgin faith associated with such a pure religious concept.

The personal God is the real God, because all the super-natural and unnatural attributes attribu-

ted to the Supreme Being by spiritualism can be logically associated only with the anthropomorphic concept. The Supreme Being is supposed to be beyond all limitations. In order to fit into the role allotted to him by his creators (God is the creation of the religious man), the Supreme Being must be unconditionally free. The creation of the physical Universe out of no available material is the highest conception of freedom, and omnipotence is born of unlimited freedom. The two concepts can never be separated without losing force; and they can assume the appearance of reality only in a personal God. Super-natural powers and attributes must remain empty conceptions, unrealities, so long as they are not conceived as the powers and attributes of a subject. That is to say, spiritual (super-natural) categories become conceivable only when they are associated with a personal God. One possessed of the extremely unbounded freedom of creating endless things out of no given substance is really above, beyond and un-circumvented by the material being. He is the real spiritual existence *par excellence*. Creation out of nothing is an act by which the creator is not bound, because there is no causal connection between the two. The personal God does not create out of necessity. He does it out of sheer whim or arbitrariness—the corollary to his omnipotence. The freedom of his

will is altogether unbounded. Since he creates, not out of necessity, but out of a sweet will, he may or may not create. He is not bound to create. Thus, he is absolutely free of any material existence—an absolutely pure spiritual being. The personal God of strictly monotheistic religions, like Christianity and Islam, therefore, is not a sign of childishness, crudity, spiritual inferiority; on the contrary, the concept represents the highest pitch of religious thought. The absurdity is not hidden behind subtle doctrines, nor made to appear plausible in a mirage of mysticism, but boldly and faithfully carried to its logical climax. A religion should be measured by religious standards. Spiritualism must be judged by the pureness of its spirituality. A body of religious thought which can attain the point of culmination, indicated by itself, without ceasing to be strictly religious, that is, without deviating from the straight path of faith, is spiritualism of the purest water. So long as religion can stand frankly as itself, on its own merit, without being ashamed of its absurdity, without finding the necessity of hiding its naked beauty of barbarism, in illfitting draperies of deception, so long it should be considered as performing a useful social function. After that, it can stand only as an artificial structure obstructing the further spiritual progress of mankind.

As against the purely spiritualist idea of a personal God, of the strictly monotheistic religions; the Supreme Being of Hindu pantheism is not a free agent. If it were really *Nirākara* and *Nirvikāra*, it could not be the cause of the world. But only in the state of absolute rest is it so. Presently, that absolute spiritual state is disturbed and the Supreme Being manifests itself as the world\* of phenomena, the seed blossoms into the tree, the spirit becomes matter. The spiritual Supreme Being is thus bound to the material existence by causal connection. Two things cannot stand in the relation of causality—one the cause, the other effect—unless there is something in common to them. The pantheist Spinoza, compelled by the rigorous logic of the mathematical precision of his philosophy, came to this conclusion, and consequently showed that consistent pantheism held in itself the germ of materialism. The Supreme Being of pantheism is not purely spiritual, because it is identical with the material world, the latter being dormant in the former, when not manifested.

It is held that an act must be preceded by a desire. The doctrine of creation ascribes desire to God, and thereby limits his absoluteness and brings him down to the human level. But the anxiety of theology and religious philosophy to divest God of his humanness destroys him as a religious reality. God can have the force of a real

existence for the religious only as a man, highly idealised, indeed a super-man, free from the limitations of man, yet built after the human model. The anxiety to rationalise the concept of God—to divest him of the human propensity to create—deprives God of his genuine godliness, of his ability to be really unbounded by matter, robs him of his reality—his *raison d'être*.

“Religion is the dream of humanity. But even in dream we are not wafted in the realm of Nothingness or in Heaven. We still remain in the realm of reality—on earth; only, we do not see real things in the light of reality and necessity, but in the dazzling shimmer of imagination and arbitrariness.” (Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*).

To deprive God of his religious reality is to abolish him. To rationalise God into a metaphysical and mystical Supreme Being, whose being, by its very nature, does not possess the force of religious reality, is to deny the existence of God. For, the conception of God is an irrational conception. Religion cannot be reconciled with reason. The honestly religious, that is, consistent spiritualist, must not be ashamed of his love with the old dame Faith, and check the inclination to flirt with the fashionable Reason. Any attempt to rationalise religion, to shift its base from faith to reason, is bound to be caught in a vicious circle of insoluble



contradictions. The religious conception of God as a super-natural being contradicts reason. On the other hand, a God conceived logically as the Universal Spirit, a synthetic God, so to say, is no God. For, by its very nature, such a God is the creation of human reason.

The Hindu pantheist doctrine of emanation or evolution, which claims spiritual superiority to the strictly religious doctrine of creation, either identifies the Supreme Being with his absolute attributes, or denudes him of all attributes. But in any case, it divests him of omnipotence and unbounded freedom. Because, the doctrine of emanation robs God of the prerogative to create at will. This doctrine does not allow God the freedom to create or not to create, as he pleases. At this ruinous price of his absolute power, and unbounded freedom, God is cleansed of the human blemish of desire—to create ; but the doctrine that places him in this light of doubtful advantage, hopelessly compromises his pure spirituality.

According to this damaging doctrine, creation does not take place in consequence of a desire on the part of God ; it makes emanation of the phenomenal world a process inherent in the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is thus eternally and inseparably associated with matter. Indeed, matter is inherent in its very being. And the insistence on the pure spirituality of the Supreme Being com-

pels the admission that parallel to it, there exists eternally a non-spiritual substance, in a germinal state.

If the Supreme Being is guaranteed against any directive, controlling or initiative function in connection with the evolution and involution of the material substance, then the doctrine of creation comes back surreptitiously. The difference is that the stature of God is reduced at least by half ; for, he may still have the freedom to create or not to create, but he can create only with the material which exists independent of, at any rate, parallel to, himself. Then, actually, he does not possess the freedom. He must create ; otherwise, the process inherent in the eternally existing material substance would go on, and the function of the Supreme Being would become obsolete.

To evade this catastrophe, pantheism does not admit the parallel existence of matter. It is identified with the spirit. But the pantheist doctrine of emanation destroys the spirituality of the unitary primal existence. Since the material world grows out of it, it must contain matter in embryo. So, either the problem of dualism comes back to make of God an useless fixture, or the unity can be preserved only as a material unity. Even the most fantastic extravagance of pantheism—the *Mayavad*—does not guarantee the pure spirituality of the Supreme Being. For, the doctrine of

emanation implies determinism. To unfold itself in the form of the phenomenal world, be it real or a hallucination, is inherent in the Supreme Being. That is to say, its movements are determined by laws ; they are laws of the Supreme Being, but laws just the same. There is no freedom in a strictly law-governed system. And existence subjected to determinism is conditioned ; therefore, it cannot be spiritual.

Then, there still remains the most elementary difficulty. Existence means extension in space. That which is limited by the material concept of space cannot be spiritual, which, to be itself, must transcend the limitations of space, time and causality. In the attempt—of theology and religious philosophy—to free religion of its native irrationality, to camouflage the primitive doctrine of creation out of nothing, God is shorn of his unbounded freedom, of his arbitrary will, completely unrestricted by anything else existing outside himself, and is placed in the disgraceful position of subordination, if not directly of matter, but in any case, of the law of determinism which obliges him to bring forth the physical phenomenon of the Universe, which again, obeying the imperious laws of determinism, go their own way, disregarding the will of the Supreme Being.

To blow up God into nothingness is atheism, even if this iconoclastic process take place as a

higher form of spiritualism. To debase spirit to the level of matter by subordinating it to determinism, is the height of irreligiosity, is the negation of spiritualism, although this devastating process of self-consummation takes place as an attack upon materialism. But this development is a necessary process. Religion necessarily leads to theology—the futile speculative attempt to describe the nature of God. Theology is futile speculation, because it can never perform the task it sets to itself. As soon as the human mind can describe him, God ceases to be God. Therefore, the historical function of theology is to destroy religion as religion. Having destroyed its own origin, theology destroys itself. Consistently developed, theology culminates into pantheism. Vedantic pantheism is the logical consequence of the theism of the Upanishads. In the pantheistic form, theology consumes itself, because consistent pantheism leads to atheism.

Thus goes on the endless process of ideological development. It is not possible to fix any one point in this process as its climax, and stop it there. Christian spiritualism, having reached the pantheistic stage, consumed itself in the philosophy of Spinoza and Hegel which, in its turn, found its logical development in the modern materialist philosophy. A similar liquidation of the Vedantic pantheism would be the real contribution of India

to world culture. Owing to historical reasons, Indian thought failed to advance further. A long period of social stagnation, which followed the unfortunate defeat of the Buddhist revolution, arrested the development of Hindu pantheism into its logical conclusion. One misfortune bred another in succession, and Indian thought remained in a state of stagnation. But the world went ahead. As soon as the prolonged social stagnation will be broken, Indian thought will go rapidly ahead from the point at which it stopped temporarily, and catch up with the progress made by others. European thought remained entangled in mystic, pantheistic spiritualism for more than a thousand years since the revolutionary role of early Christianity had been played out. Finally, it came out of the vicious circle. It has been India's fate to linger much longer in the twilight of decayed spiritualism. She also must come out of that darkness if she desires to join the progressive march of mankind. The world does not need her message of mystic pantheistic spiritualism. The western civilisation has had the experience of that bliss, and has finally produced something superior. India herself should be able to learn the true message of her ancient culture. The correct evaluation of her mystic-pantheist philosophy is to discern the germ of materialism embedded in it. In order to draw practical inspiration from her old culture, India

must learn to appreciate its positive outcome, which amounts to the liquidation of the religious mode of thought and an incentive for the acquisition of scientific knowledge. The highest appreciation of the ancient culture of India would be to find out how it could help us out of the vicious circle of decayed spiritualism, and indicate the way to real spiritual freedom offered by the materialist philosophy.

**END**









